

HiCN Households in Conflict Network

The Institute of Development Studies - at the University of Sussex - Falmer - Brighton - BN1 9RE
www.hicn.org

The 1990-1992 Massacres in Rwanda: A Case of Spatial and Social Engineering?

Philip Verwimp*

philip.verwimp@gmail.com

HiCN Working Paper 94

February 2011

Abstract: Until now, two main sets of arguments have dominated the debate on the nature of the massacres that were perpetrated in Rwanda before the 1994 genocide. The first one maintains that they constituted a response to prior attacks by the RPF, implying that they should be regarded as military operations, rather than as acts of ethnic cleansing. The second common line of argument is that these massacres served as pilot runs for the subsequent genocide, implying that they were part of a plan that was not to see its full implementation until 1994. This paper puts forth a third, alternative interpretation of these massacres. The first of the aforementioned arguments, it is argued, does not take into account the detailed evidence that is available on the killings: the fact that they took place in the context of the civil war accounts for the timing of the massacres, but not for their genocidal character. In turn, the second interpretation fails to situate these massacres against the agro-pastoral and ideological background of the regime that committed them. By contrast, this paper shows that the massacres took place in areas characterized by a specific history of spatial and social engineering. They are best understood against the background of the processes of land colonisation, re-settlement, depredation and dispossession of cattle and land that were under way in the areas where the land was most scarce, and where the peasant society was being subject to rationalisation and re-modelling from above. The paper concludes that pastoralism was sentenced to disappear from Rwanda and that the massacres should be considered instances of ethnic cleansing.

Keywords: massacres, pastoralism, state, social engineering, genocide, Rwanda

Acknowledgements: This paper is peer-reviewed and will be part of a special issue on the Agrarian Roots of Violent Conflict, forthcoming in the Journal of Agrarian Change. The author expresses his gratitude to the persons who shared their knowledge on the subject over the years, in particular Ben Kiernan, Alison Desforges (†), André Guichaoua, Jean-Philippe Platteau, Antoon Vandavelde and Peter Uvin. Only the author is responsible for the views expressed in this article. The guest editors, three anonymous reviewers as well as seminar participants at Yale University's Order, Conflict and Violence Program have contributed substantially to improve the paper.

* Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management and ECARES, Université Libre de Bruxelles.

INTRODUCTION

Between 1990 and 1992, around 2,000 Tutsi civilians were killed in a number of massacres that were perpetrated in Rwanda – mainly in the north-west of the country, but also in the south-eastern region of Bugesera. These massacres, while denied at the time by the local and national authorities, have been well documented and are now considered a part of our body of knowledge concerning the 1990-1992 period of Rwandan history. Thanks to several high-profile publications on human-rights violations in Rwanda, there is no doubt that these massacres indeed took place.¹ According to reports by diplomats and human rights organisations, the anti-Tutsi pogroms of 1990, 1991 and 1992 were in fact organized by the national and local authorities. These pogroms, which occurred in several different communes, took place in locations that had been carefully chosen by the national leaders. The leadership mobilized the Hutu peasants by spreading rumours (fabricated stories) in order to install fear and incite Hutu hatred. One report, dated March 1993, has discussed the applicability of the term ‘genocide’ to the killings that had already taken place prior to that date, while another, published in August 1993, argues that the killings comply with the international definition of genocide.

With regard to the interpretation of the massacres, particularly their *cause(s)*, the scholarly community is in disagreement. Generally speaking, two main sets of arguments have been put forth in order to explain the massacres that were committed in Rwanda in the period between October 1st, 1990 and April 6th, 1994. The first one, formulated in slightly

¹ The four most cited reports on human-rights violations that focus on, and were published during, this period are: (1) International Commission on Human Rights Violations in Rwanda since October 1990 (FIDH, March 1993), which implicates the country’s highest-level authorities in the organisation of the killing of 2,000 Tutsi in several locations throughout Rwanda; (2) the report published by the US Department of State in February 1993 which describes the massacres of the Bagogwe (Jan. 1991) and of the Tutsi in Bugesera (March 1992) (in March 1991, the US Department of State had already published a report on the January 1991 massacre); (3) two reports published by the Rwandan human-rights group ADL in December 1992 and December 1993, respectively, which describe in detail several massacres and instances of human rights violations against the Tutsi; and (4) the report by the UN special rapporteur on Rwanda that was released in August 1993, which maintains that these massacres comply with the international definition of genocide.

different versions by René Lemarchand, Filip Reyntjens and Scott Strauss (among others) maintains that these massacres were linked to the war (Reyntjens, 1994); constituted a rational response to attacks by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) on the part of a population that felt threatened (Lemarchand, 2002); or constituted a response to RPF attacks by the government and the local authorities in a context of war, insecurity and political uncertainty (Strauss, 2006).

All these authors have in common the fact that they place the war in the centre of their explanations of the massacres – whether this is presented as having been exacerbated by fear on the part of the population, in some versions, or driven by a response on the part of the leadership with a view to re-establishing order, in other versions. Lemarchand adds that the response on the part of the peasant population had a spontaneous character: ‘They had no other choice but to kill in order not to be killed’. Strauss applies this line of reasoning not only to the 1994 genocide and the 1990-92 massacres, but also to those that were perpetrated in late December 1962 – at which time between 5,000 and 10,000 Tutsi civilians were brutally put to death in the province of Gikongoro. According to Strauss (2006, p.184-188) this latter massacre took place in reaction to an attack on Kigali via Bugesera (in the province of Rural Kigali) by armed Tutsi.

The second set of arguments regards these massacres as trial runs in preparation for the 1994 genocide. In her seminal book on the Rwandan genocide, Alison Des Forges writes that ‘[t]o execute a campaign against Tutsi effectively took practice. Before the grim background of war, economic distress, violent political competition, insecurity and impunity, and to the accompaniment of virulent propaganda, radicals staged the practice for the catastrophe to come. The rehearsals took place in more than a dozen communities’ (1999, 87).

With the benefit of hindsight, these massacres may seem like pilot runs or rehearsals leading up to the 1994 genocide, but this latter event cannot be considered a satisfactory

explanation for events that preceded it. Rather, the explanation for the 1990-92 events needs to be sought in facts and events that either took place at the same time as these massacres or preceded them. Des Forges argues that the massacres were organized by Habyarimana and his supporters, and adds that the regime used ethnic violence to its advantage. At a time when Habyarimana was facing military and political threats (p.87-88), these massacres strengthened his position, fostered Hutu solidarity and rallied the Hutu behind a united cause. This author's analysis portrays these massacres as having been perpetrated for instrumental reasons (in order to consolidate power, heighten ethnic tensions and polarize society), which is in stark contrast to the proponents of the 'war argument', for whom the massacres were a desperate expedient, a price that had to be paid and a response to prior attacks that had disturbed peace and order.

In order to understand why it was that the regime organized attacks on Tutsi citizens from the very beginning of the civil war, it is necessary to look at the details of the massacres that were perpetrated prior to 1994. For this, it is useful to draw on the report published in March 1993 by the International Commission of Human Rights Investigators – a group of experts who investigated several of the massacres that took place in Rwanda in January of that year. This report provides a wealth of detail on these massacres and, in this paper, special attention is given to the sequence of events in each of these early massacres.

It is probably futile to look for one *single* objective or explanation behind the massacre policy of 1990-92. It is highly likely that several different factors played significant roles at the time – including the threat posed by the RPF and the governments' wish to show its resolve, consolidate its power and foster Hutu solidarity. In view of the arguments put forth in the literature, however, one major factor is arguably missing in the discussion: the peasant ideology professed and practiced by the Habyarimana regime. Taking the latter into account allows for an alternative explanation of the massacres, or at least for a richer interpretation of

the motivation behind the massacres. This third interpretation is as follows: the Habyarimana regime had adopted a policy of agricultural extensification – turning all available land, such as pastures, marshes and forests, into cultivable land – as opposed to a policy of intensification. In Rwanda, this policy came up against the land frontier in the late 1980s, i.e. all the land had by then been converted to agricultural activity. In their turn, pastoralist groups like the Hima and the Bagogwe used land as pastures for their cattle, living off the cattle itself and the trade in meat and dairy products. They did not cultivate and were therefore considered a non-agricultural group. Under the predominant ideology of the Second Republic, which portrayed itself as a Peasant-State, pastoral groups were marginalized, and pastoral lands were converted into land for cultivation and into *paysannats* – the prime agrarian settlement scheme. Pastoralism as a way of life did not fit within the agrarian order of the Second Republic, which was built on a vision of hard-working smallholder peasants.² The regime thus used the opportunities provided by the civil war in order to claim the last remaining parcels of land by finishing off the last remnants of pastoralism in Rwanda. Therefore, these massacres can be described as a case of ethnic cleansing. The point was not that the Hima, the Bagogwe and the Tutsi owned cattle (for many rich Hutu and the dignitaries of the Habyarimana regime did so, too), but that their pastoralist livelihood did not fit in the Peasant-State. One can romanticize peasant cultivation, but when such an ideology is combined with racism towards ethnic groups regarded as non-peasant, such as the Tutsi, it can assume an extremely violent character.³ This interpretation is supported by the socio-economic geography of the

² For an institutionalist and political economy perspective to conflict between agriculture and pastoralism I refer to Platteau (2000) and to Salih et al (2001).

³ For a discussion of the link between romanticism and violence I refer to Kiernan (2007).

massacres, and for that reason this paper seeks to draw attention to the spatial dimensions of violent conflict.⁴

A.M. Brandstetter is one of the few scholars that have analysed the peasant ideology of the regime. In her 2001 article on purity and violence in Rwanda, she puts forth the argument that the 1994 genocide was an act of purification of the body politic whereby the sons of the soil (the peasants) sought to clear the bush. Although this author did not address the 1990-1992 massacres, nor examined the agrarian re-settlement schemes, my own analysis has many aspects in common with hers. For example, she argues that ‘the genocide, through its violence, was meant to implement the exclusion of the pastoralists from the project to constitute an agrarian society’ (Brandstetter 2001, 68, author’s translation from the German text). In their turn, Bezy (1990) and Newbury (1992), writing on rural development in Rwanda, have highlighted the limitations of the extensive land policy: agricultural production was increased only because more land was taken into cultivation, not due to agricultural innovations or intensification. By the end of the 1980s, the physical land frontier had been reached: there was no more land available to be taken into cultivation (Bezy 1990, Newbury 1992).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Rwanda’s history can be traced through the management and settlement of land, driven by political power on the one hand and population growth on the other. As long as Tutsi held political power, they earmarked land for pastures. When that power disappeared, the land was turned into agricultural land. Habyarimana was not against cattle, presumably he recognized the value of having a cow for dung as fertilizer. The point made by Bart (1993, p.185) is that

⁴ See, for example, Raleigh et al (2010); also see Nathan (2005).

he disfavoured the traditional way of holding cattle, meaning herding a lot of cattle that grazed on pastures. For him this was an inefficient use of the land.

The re-organization of agrarian space, land settlement in the *paysannats* (organized settlement schemes), *umuganda* (mandatory communal labour), the development of the five-year plans as well as the nationwide anti-erosion campaign are part of the agrarian developmental state that Rwanda became under the Second Republic. The developmental state was organized much in the same way as mapped out by James Scott in his 1998 book *Seeing Like a State*. Scott characterizes four elements constituting disastrous social engineering: the administrative ordering of nature and society, or its ‘legibility’; a high modernist ideology; an authoritarian state; and a prostrate civil society. Ethnic cleansing may be considered as an especially extreme form of social engineering.⁵ This occurs when the social engineers not only regard space, land, cattle and settlements as malleable factors, but the size and the composition of the population itself. Scott’s insights apply clearly to the case of Rwanda.

(i) *The administrative ordering of nature and society or its ‘legibility’.*

Rwanda was a highly and tightly organized society. The penetration of its administration into the hills was unmatched in Africa (Guichaoua, 1997; McDoom, 2009). From the ethnic identity card system, the detailed registration of births, marriages and deaths at the communal level, the policy of ‘ethnic equilibrium’ in schools and in the administration, the parallel organisation of the Party and the State from the national down to the cellule level, to the policy to keep people in the rural areas, the Second Republic was neatly organized, as a pyramid from the top to the bottom. Many observers were stunned by the degree of

⁵ We refer to Michael Mann (2005) for a treatment of the common ethnic cleansing roots of many advanced democracies and to Mark Mazower (1998) on mass population movements and forms of ethnic cleansing in Europe in the 20th century.

organisation and thus by the presence of statecraft in the life of ordinary Rwandans. The desire to order was not limited to its inhabitants, but also applied to nature, as witnessed in the drive to re-organize agrarian space, land settlement and agrarian order all together.

(ii) High-modernist ideology

This is defined by Scott as a ‘muscle-bound version of the self-confidence about scientific and technical progress, the expansion of production, ... the mastery of nature ... and, above all, the rational design of social order’ (1998, 4). It must not be confused with scientific practice. What is meant here is a coherent set of beliefs that are not open for questioning. The design of five-year production plans, the mobilisation of the entire peasantry in weekly *umuganda*, the expansion of the *paysannats*, the denial of crop failure and famine conditions in the south in 1989 and the nationwide anti-erosion campaign testify to the revolutionary beliefs held by the leaders of the Second Republic. On the latter campaign Guichaoua (1991) writes that it illustrates how a standardized, agrarian order, implemented with geometric precision, is not able to accommodate variation in soil quality, steepness and local needs and as such invites peasant resistance (Guichaoua 1991). While communist countries adopted industrialisation as their version of the developmental state, the Agrarian Nation that Rwanda would remain under the Second Republic, founded on a ruralist and peasant ideology, was Habyarimana’s version of the developmental state.

(iii) An authoritarian State

The authoritarian character of the Second Republic is demonstrated by several of its features. Chief amongst these, we find the centralisation of power (military, executive, party) in the hands of the president; the carrot and stick policy employed in the coffee sector (Little and Horowitz, 1987, 1988 and Verwimp, 2003); the fact that all Rwandans were required by law

to be members of the MRND; the prohibition to form other political parties; the submission of the judiciary to the authority of the single party; the weekly animation sessions in honour of the president; the forced removal of people from their land in order to create tea plantations; the organisation of mock elections; and the killing of political adversaries (1976, 1988).⁶

(iv) A prostrate civil society

This is defined by Scott as the lack of capacity to resist state plans. In his 1998 book *Aiding Violence*, Peter Uvin paints a bleak picture of civil society in Rwanda. In chapter 8 of the book, titled 'And Where was Civil Society', Uvin describes exactly what James Scott has in mind: a weak and usurped civil society incapable of making a fist when most needed. According to Prunier (1995) the MRND was totalitarian. Its first letter 'M' stands for Movement, and the party manifest said that its task was to mobilize all living forces for the benefit of the nation. Hence there was no need for organisations outside the party. Even the highest religious authority; the archbishop of Kigali, was a member of the Central Committee of the MRND until ordered to resign from that position by the Pope.

POPULATION, SPACE AND SETTLEMENTS

The strength of the state was used to re-model agrarian space, register and control the population and replace politics by development. But it did not stop there. Social planners considered the size and the composition of the population as malleable factors, both at the local level and the national level. This is best illustrated by the rural to rural migration and resettlement into *paysannats* settlement schemes.

⁶ Animation sessions took place once a week after *umuganda* and consisted of singing and dancing in honour of president J.Habyarimana.

The Habyarimana regime promoted internal rural to rural migration and re-settlement from densely populated to less densely populated areas. In this way, newly colonized land as well as land previously earmarked for pasture was transformed into agricultural land. Olson who studied migration patterns in Rwanda, writes that:

After independence, increasing population pressure resulted in changing economic circumstances, such as rapid decline in farm sizes and available land per person. One response was a high rate of out-migration from the areas experiencing the most pressure. The destination of these migrants was influenced by political factors; the government was interested in settling land previously used for pastoral activities so it promoted organized settlement schemes in the East. (1990, p.150)

A specific agricultural settlement scheme, the *paysannat*, was part of this re-settlement plan. Farm households were given a plot of land which they could cultivate on condition that part of the plot, specified in a contract, was allocated to an export crop such as coffee or pyrethrum. The latter was grown in the province of Ruhengeri on land in Mukingo commune previously used as pastures by the Bagogwe (see below). The contract stipulated that division, fractionalisation or renting out of the plot was not allowed (art.4) and that upon signing the contract and at the latest six months after, the holder renounces his rights to previously held land and pastures (Bart, p.406, author's translation). While the farmers in the *paysannats* were in general better equipped (water tanks, pipes, mills, silos) and monitored (1 agricultural monitor per 120 instead of 750 households), this kind of contract was not compatible with the traditional way of living of Rwanda's farmers, in particular in terms of marriage and inheritance. As a consequence Bart found married couples still living with their parents. He also found many absentee owners (traders, army officers, civil servants) benefiting from the settlement scheme without residing in it.⁷

The First and Second Republics vastly expanded the area devoted to the *paysannats* and the people living in them, allowing Bart (p.391) to write in 1993 that 1/20 farmers now

⁷ The Belgian administration for development cooperation, assessed that the costs of the *paysannats* are out of proportion with the benefits (Bart, 1993, 405).

live in such a settlement scheme. The authorities used the scheme to put in place a coherent policy of land colonisation and control of internal migration. At the regional level the *paysannats* dominate the landscape and the communes in which they are implemented. During the first ten years of Habyarimana's presidency (1973-1983), the number of households living in *paysannats* increased from 30.000 to 54.000 (250.000 people, see Figure 1 below, Bart, p. 393), with the bulk of the increase in the first five years and with a new *paysannat* in Mutara (Byumba province). Jean-Claude Willame (1995, p.136) writes that the authorities associated the *paysannat* schemes and the projects for integrated rural development with the Hutu Revolution. This was a short cut from the side of the authorities because the *paysannat* settlement schemes already existed before independence and were a product of the colonial regime. It does show, however, how much the First and Second Republics continued these schemes and considered them *their* policy.

The population that came to live in the *paysannats* originated from the most densely populated or poorest areas of Rwanda (Gisenyi and Ruhengeri in the north and Butare and Gikongoro in the south). They left their ancestral rural land to become modern farmers in a new environment prepared and managed by the state. Map 1 gives the example for the region of Bugesera. Francois Bart (1993, p.395), in his seminal book on the geography of Rwandan agriculture, writes that farm households from densely populated areas in Rwanda came to live in the *paysannats*, sometimes mixed with locals. All those residing in the *paysannats*, however had to adapt their way of living to the new settlement scheme. This meant (1993, 395):

In Masaka, in the *paysannat* of Icyanya; most of the 92 pastoralist households stayed and accepted the new conditions thereby changing progressively their way of living. In the *paysannat* in Ntongwe, in Mayaya, 11 out of 20 interviewed households declared to be originating from the hill where from 1966 onwards the *paysannat* was established. They said that the authorities obliged them to move their house alongside the new road. In this case, the *paysannat* presents itself as an enterprise for the remodelling of the pre-existing agrarian structure. Essentially, it proceeds with the colonisation of new land more than the reshaping of existing land structures.

During fieldwork on the origins of the genocide in the province of Gitarama in 2004, we found that the administration appointed an agronomist and an agricultural surveyor per commune as well as agricultural monitors (i.e. extension agents) who were assigned to three cells at a time.⁸ Farmers who did not follow careful maintenance practices were punished with a fine of 100 RWF per coffee tree. The agronomist and agricultural monitors came two to three times a month to check on the coffee trees and to punish delinquent coffee growers. In the area we visited there used to be a *paysannat* where the agronomist and the monitors also organized the weekly *umuganda*. Consequently, they had a lot of sway and power over the people in the *paysannat*. The agricultural surveyor had a list of families to visit each season to collect data about their fields and to find out how much each produced. This information was recorded to keep track of the *paysannat* statistics and agricultural records.

IDEOLOGY

The Peasant-State

At the birth of the Second Republic in October 1973, during a speech at the National University of Rwanda, in Butare, the new president Habyarimana declared that ‘celui qui ne veut pas travailler est nuisible à la société’ (translated: the one who refuses to work is harmful to society). Habyarimana did not direct his speech against the radical leaders (professors and students) who, as members of the *Committee de Salut Public* in the first half of 1973 had expelled all Tutsi from the campus. On the contrary, he lamented against the feudal-monarchists:

The coup d’état that we did, was above all a moral coup d’état. And what we want, and we would consider our action as failed if we do not reach this goal, what we want, is to ban once and for all, the spirit of intrigue and feudal mentality. What we want is

⁸ A cell was the smallest administrative unit in Rwanda consisting of between 50 to 100 families. For an analysis of the results of the field work we refer to Pinchotti and Verwimp (2007).

to give back labour and individual yield its real value. Because, we say it again, the one who refuses to work is harmful to society.⁹

This small excerpt contains the core of Habyarimana's peasant ideology.¹⁰ In 1986, Habyarimana said on two occasions that the peasants were the real employers of Rwanda, because they allowed the State to function. On the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the existence of the Rwandan Republic, on July 1st, 1987, Habyarimana devoted his official speech to the glorification of the Rwandan peasant. He said that:

If in the 25 years of our independence Rwanda has known a lot of success in its struggle for progress, if it has been able to take a number of important steps, it is in the first place our farmers who made this happen ... it is their total devotion to the work, every day ... their fabulous capacity to adapt, their pragmatism, their genius, their profound knowledge of our eco-systems that allowed them to extract an amazing degree of resources from their plots of land.

At the time, a commentator wrote that never before had such honour been given to the Rwandan peasants (Ntamahungiro 1988). Four months later, on the occasion of the Government Council of November 13th, 1987, Habyarimana ennobled the Rwandan peasant by extending the term 'peasant' (*Umuturage*) to all Rwandans. The term *umuturage* was commonly used in opposition to the civilized, educated, urban or bourgeois person. *Umuturage* was used in a pejorative sense for the downtrodden, the uncivilized, the rural population. By using and ennobling the term *umuturage*, Habyarimana wanted to invert the common meaning of the terms. From now on *umuturage* would be a noble term, all Rwandans should be *umuturage* and they should be proud of that. In 1988, Ntamahungiro wrote:

To give a medal of honour to each and every peasant. To decorate some peasants as Model Farmers. To give decorations at certain officials considered close to the peasantry. To baptise a street, a place, a hotel, a day in the name of the peasants. To compose a song in their honour. To organise popular parties in each commune or sector. There is no shortage of ideas and we can count on the creativity of certain minds to supply tailor-made expressions ... We know, however, how much this part,

⁹ Habyarimana, J, Speech at the occasion of the opening of the academic year in Butare, October 14th, 1973,

¹⁰ The peasant ideology of the regime is explained in detail in Verwimp (2006). For a comparative approach to the contribution of peasant ideology and ruralisation to genocide, see Nairn (1998).

the majority of the population, suffers. The visits of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communal Development and of the Minister of Justice have shown us some of these injustices. From her side, the national press regularly provides evidence of the poverty in the rural areas and in the cities. (Ntamahungiro, *ibid*, 8)

In Habyarimana's speeches, in MRND documents and in the writings of Rwandan authors and scholars, 'feudal' always refers to the Tutsi monarchy who ruled Rwanda before the 1959-1962 Revolution. In a 1987 Anniversary book commissioned by the President's office, the 1959-1962 revolution is called a *peasant revolution*. In other works it is called the *Social Revolution* or the *Hutu Revolution*. This means that the term 'peasant' is used for 'Hutu' and the term 'bourgeois' or 'feudal' is used for Tutsi. In other words, in Habyarimana's *ideology* the Tutsi were not peasants, they were always considered the bourgeois or feudalists. This juxtaposition is clearly demonstrated in the work of J.P Chrétien – a French historian – and Anna-Maria Brandstetter – a German anthropologist who specializes in Central Africa:

The government presented itself as République égalitaire and continues to set its hopes on the myth of the egalitarian, peasant society in spite of the growing social and economic tensions. It looks upon itself as the inheritance of the 'peasant revolution'...The regime's founding ideology spoke of the sociological majority (la pure démocratie du peuple majoritaire) which had permanently overcome the 'minority of the feudal Tutsi' (minorité des féodaux tutsi). The Hutu were equated with a democratic majority or 'majority people' (rubanda nyamwinshi) and the Tutsi with an aristocratic and feudal minority....Rwanda was termed 'the Land of the Hutu'....and the opposition between Hutu peasantry and Tutsi feudalism remained central to their discourse.¹¹

Main Ideologues

The activities of three people, all closely connected with the top of the MRND and Habyarimana himself, deserve closer attention: Hassan Ngeze, Léon Mugesera and Ferdinand Nahimana. The journal *Kangura*, which started publishing anti-Tutsi articles in May 1990, was printed at a state-run printing press in Kigali, receiving subsidized credit or reduced prices (African Rights, 1995). In its June 1990 issue, four months before the start of the war,

¹¹ Brandstetter (1997) refers to J.P.Chétien (1991, 1992) and Panabel (1995).

editor Hassan Ngeze claimed that 70 per cent of Rwanda's prominent businessmen were Tutsi. He also wrote that these rich Tutsi collaborate with refugees outside the country.¹² The theme of Tutsi wealth and Tutsi control of the Rwandan economy would come up in many editions of *Kangura* in subsequent months and years. In December 1990, two months before the massacre of the Bagogwe (see below), the 'Ten Commandments' (part of an 'Appel à la conscience des Bahutu') were published in *Kangura*. The text is a racist anti-Tutsi statement, prescribing rules of behaviour for all Hutu in their interaction with Tutsi. It argues that all Hutu who have Tutsi wives, Tutsi concubines and all Hutu who do business with Tutsi are traitors. The *Appel* says that the Tutsi inside Rwanda are the accomplices of the RPF and that the enemy is among us. These messages were very effective in arousing fear of the Tutsi and brought home the message that 'the enemy is among us'.

Ferdinand Nahimana was a university professor of history before he became director of ORINFOR. He was already 'active' in 1973 on the Butare campus *Committee du Salut Public* which implemented the expulsion of Tutsi students and professors from the university. In 1988 he published a book on Rwandan culture and development in which he explained and glorified Habyarimana's approach to development and to the peasantry. In his book, *umuganda* is described as a virtuous practice deeply ingrained in Rwandan culture and tradition.¹³ Under his leadership Radio Rwanda was openly racist. In February 1993 Nahimana advocated a civilian defence force made up of young people. He stressed the

¹² *Kangura*, June 1990, No. 3, p.3

¹³ Nahimana, F., 1988, *Conscience chez-nous, Confiance en nous: notre culture est la base de notre développement harmonieux*, Ruhengeri, Presse National du Rwanda. The author states that the book has been published with the support of the presidency of the MRND and the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research. In 1990, an official MRND publication even goes a step further when it deplores that the value of *umuganda* was lost through contact with the coloniser and in particular because of the introduction of money, the generalisation of education and salaried employment. Translated from the French version in *Umuganda dans le développement National*, MRND, Kigali, 1990, p.10.

usefulness of such a popular force to safeguard the peace inside the country.¹⁴ In August 1993 Nahimana became head of RTLM, the notorious hate radio.

Léon Mugesera was vice-president of the MRND in Gisenyi. In November 1992 he gave a speech in Gaseke commune that would resonate nationally because of its racist content.¹⁵ In the speech he rhetorically asked whether the Hutu were waiting for the *Inyenzi* (cockroaches) to come and kill them. We made a fatal mistake in 1959, he said, by allowing the Tutsi to leave. If the judicial authorities do not act against RPF accomplices, he said, the population must take matters in their own hand. He asked whether his audience knew that the Falasha (Ethiopia's Jewish population) returned to Israel and suggested that the Tutsi should be sent to their homeland Ethiopia via the Nyabarongo river. He started and ended his speech with a salute to president Habyarimana who never disavowed the content or the speaker. He also attacked Hutu of other parties who were negotiating with the RPF and called them *Inyenzi* talking with other *Inyenzi*. He blamed the Hutu of other parties for the loss of Byumba to the RPF. Hutu should not allow themselves 'to be invaded'. Mugesera ended his speech with a call for unity: 'we must all rise, act as one person'. Strauss (2006, p.197) interprets this speech as a call for retaliation, self-defence and deterrence.

That Mugesera's speech was understood as a 'program' is confirmed by the words of the burgomaster of Kibilira (see below) who said that that the program announced by Mugesera would be continued. Ngeze, Mugesera and Nahimana were seen by everybody as acting on behalf of Rwanda's leadership. They owed their jobs to their MRND mentors and were die-hard ideologues of the cause. They incited hatred among the population with impunity, which could only mean that they were protected from above.

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, 1999, *Leave None to tell the Story*, p.110

¹⁵ Speech by Léon Mugesera before the militants of the MRND, sous-préfecture de Kabaya, Gisenyi, 22 Novembre 1992, mimeo, translation from French to English by the author.

ECONOMY

Despite the peasant-friendly rhetoric, major policies enacted by the regime were or remained peasant-friendly only when they did not hinder other objectives. Two examples illustrate this. *First*, coffee policy. While the state-owned coffee marketing agency OCIR Café (Office des Cafés du Rwanda) gave a relatively high price to peasant producers in the first half of the Second Republic, Habyarimana's penal code contained penalties for ripping out or neglecting coffee trees. When from the second half of the eighties onwards the international price of coffee plummeted, the regime could no longer afford to buy the loyalty from the peasant producer offering a high price and switched to coercion and repression to maintain its power.¹⁶ *Second*, food policy. Habyarimana was very pre-occupied with the food-population equilibrium. Because he did not want to introduce family planning to reduce the number of births, he could only try to increase food production. Production increased at the rate of population growth as long as new land was taken into cultivation. Willame (1995, p.135) writes that *productivity* however never increased. Thus, as soon as all land was taken into cultivation, the production of food *per capita* started to decline. Notwithstanding a commitment to food production, Habyarimana did not hesitate to move people from their land, undoubtedly because of the need for export earnings. In Gisovu commune, Kibuye province, several hundred households were expropriated to make room for a tea-plantation. Bart (p.456) writes that this met open hostility from the population. Expropriation also occurred in Gisenyi where 450 households were removed from their land to make space for the expansion of the tea plantations in Nyabihu in Karago commune. Von Braun et al (1991, p.114) write that about 300 hectares of land was expropriated for this purpose.¹⁷ They found that the expropriation took place in 1977 and 1985. Displaced households, more than other

¹⁶ Verwimp (2003) describes in detail the political economy of coffee and power under Habyarimana.

¹⁷ On a national level, expropriation and conversion of land for tea-estates took place on forested land, pasture land and cultivated land (World Bank, 1991 and IFPRI, 1991).

households, earned a larger part of their income by working for the tea-factory (Von Braun et al, 1991, p.81). Not all of the displaced households remained in the commune. Bart (p.456) writes that a few dozen households were re-settled in the *paysannat* of nearby Kinigi, while others left for Bugesera or to Mutara.

The mid-eighties marked a turning point in the state of Rwanda's economy under Habyarimana. There was no more land to be taken into cultivation. Land size per household was 1.4 hectares at the end of the seventies and only 0.8 hectares in 1991. Drawing on survey research in 1988 and 1993, André and Platteau (1998) have demonstrated the extent of land conflicts between and within households. The international price of coffee plummeted in 1986 and in 1989. By 1990 the coffee farmer could buy, in real terms, only 1kg of beans with 3kg of coffee, where this rate had been 1 to 1 ten years earlier. Rwanda's sole mine (tin) was closed. Growth of real GDP per capita declined from 1.7 per year at the end of the seventies to -2.6 per year ten years later (World Bank, 1991 and Berlage et al, 1993). The discontent of farmers was revealed when they ripped out coffee trees and refused to show up for *umuganda*, the weekly communal labour program (OCIR Café 1992; Tardiff-Douglan et al, 1993; Uvin, 1998). Despite the fact that food self-sufficiency was the central aim of Habyarimana's agricultural policy, and indeed the key declared objective of his entire reign, the southern prefectures of Gikongoro and parts of Butare were hit by crop failure and famine in 1989. Instead of coming to the rescue of desperate peasants, the regime forbade journalists to write about the crop failure, did not issue food import licences until a year later and denied that starvation was happening in the south.¹⁸ The mismanagement and eventual dismantling of state food agency OPROVIA, the marketing board set up to protect farm gate prices for beans

¹⁸ The vivid reality of crop failure and starvation was, at the time, revealed in the catholic periodic *Kinyamateka* in 1989 and 1990. This episode of crop failure and starvation as well as the denial and the inaction of the regime have been analyzed in detail in Verwimp (2002). The effects of the crop failure on child health are analyzed in Akresh et al (2011).

and sorghum, which could have intervened to stop the starvation, caused despair among the peasants (Pottier, 1993).

Economic development was understood as maintaining the peaceful life of the peasant population in the rural areas. The peasants' only duty was to produce, as the leadership took upon itself the burden of managing the affairs of the state (Prunier, 1995). The MNRD was not a political party; it was a movement for development. Parliament was named the National Council for Development. This approach to rural development was an integral part of the ideological stand of the regime. This can be illustrated by the absence of rural to urban migration. Rwanda was the least urbanized country in the world (95 per cent of the population lived in the rural areas) and the regime wanted this to remain that the case. This is time and again repeated in the discourse of Habyarimana. While the rural character of Rwandan society was praised by the authorities for making it possible for the capital not to have any slums, its consequences were in fact dire: a massive concentration of the working population in the agricultural sector, with access only to tiny plots of land and without any hope of ever leaving agriculture for either the current or the subsequent generations (Uvin, 1998). In a document of the Ministry of Planning it is argued that 'we should avoid that the unemployed rural masses come to the city where they can cause social and political upheaval.'¹⁹ While the deliberate choice not to urbanize Rwanda was underpinned by ideological and political motivations, it hindered economic development (World Bank, 1991).

THE MASSACRES COMMITTED BETWEEN OCTOBER 1990 AND MID-1992

Mass Imprisonment Right After the Start of the War in October 1990

¹⁹ Translated from the French text in Guichaoua (1988).

It is highly likely that Rwanda's intelligence service informed Habyarimana of the upcoming attack by the RPF (Adelman and Suhrke 1996, 20). Already in May 1989, at the summit of Nyagatare, the Ugandan president Museveni had warned Habyarimana of a potential invasion.²⁰ This means that the regime could prepare itself for the attack. The 'preparation', however, was not a military one, as one would expect. Des Forges (1999, p.49) writes that the Rwandan commander at the border, aware of the pending invasion, demanded reinforcements from headquarters. He got none, leading him and others to speculate that Habyarimana wanted the invasion. Apart from soliciting French military support (and thus drawing in foreign powers in the conflict) few military preparations were made. Asked by the author why the regime did not fight the rebels more forcefully (it is well-known that the war between the RPF and the FAR was a low-intensity war with a limited number of battles and a limited number of casualties), a person close to Habyarimana answered 'I believe Habyarimana counted on the population'.²¹ We encounter here the notion that 'the population or the people' will at one point come to the rescue of the Nation, embodied in the figure of the president. We will come back to this below when we discuss ideology.

Only three days after the attack, the regime launched a faked attack on the capital Kigali which allowed it, under the veil of assuring security, to round-up 8,000 to 10,000 people and put them in prison.²² Many of them were Tutsi businessmen and intellectuals. They were held without charge in deplorable conditions for several months, they were tortured and several dozen died in prison.²³ It was not the first time that the regime rounded up many people in Kigali. In the mid-eighties it launched a campaign against 'loose women'

²⁰ Nsengiyaremye, D., *La Transition Démocratique au Rwanda (1989-1993)*, in Guichaoua, A., *ibidem*, p.247

²¹ Interview, Kigali, November 2000.

²² Strauss (2006) doubts that the faked attack was intentional and argues that it may have been caused by panicky soldier firing (p.192).

²³ De Standaard, 1990, 15 october 1990; Reyntjens 1994, p.95; Desforges, 1999, p. 49

by taking young girls from the street who were accused of being prostitutes and transported them to a re-education camp (Jefremovas, 1991).

The Hima of Mutara (Savannah in North-east Byumba)

Until 1972 several groups of pastoralists, the Hima, lived as a nomadic people with their herds of cattle in the savannah of Mutara, in the north of the prefecture of Byumba, in the communes of Muvumba and Ngarama. In August and September 1973, 4.762 Burundian refugees were installed in Mutara, near the church of Rukomo (Bart, p.397). Their settlement site was known as the *paysannat* of the Barundi and it marked the beginning of the colonisation of the Mutara region. From 1974 onwards OVAPAM (Office pour la Valorisation Pastorale et Agricole du Mutara), a large integrated project installed 11.850 families in an area of 37.000 hectares (Bart, p.526). The pasture land was organized into ranches where the cattle owners were taught modern livestock techniques. In order to benefit from these services, the pastoralists had to sign a contract in which they renounced their rights to other land and agreed to follow the instructions given by OVAPAM staff for the treatment of the cattle.

On October 8, 1990, one week after the beginning of hostilities between the RPF and the FAR, soldiers from the FAR murder *at least* 65 Hima in Mutara.²⁴ A journalist from *De Standaard* (Belgium's leading newspaper) visited Rukomo several days after the massacre. He wrote that it was clear that the Hutu from the *paysannat* were implicated in the killings and in the looting of the Hima ranches. The journalist added that his interviews with people in the area contradicted official statements denying that there was a bloodbath (president

²⁴ Association Rwandaise pour la Défense des Droits de la Personne et des Libertés Publiques, *Rapport sur les droits de l'homme au Rwanda*, Kigali; décembre 1992, p.83-85. The report mentions many other names, but without exact date of death, reason why I write *at least* 65. In *Hope for Rwanda* (1997, p.41-42), André Sibomana put the figure at several hundred, a number also used by FIDH (1993, p.62) and Des Forges (1999), p.50.

Habyarimana) or blaming the Tutsi for the killings (the Rwandan Embassy in Washington, DC). He also wrote that people in Rukomo believed that the killing was planned ahead and they considered it as punishment for the Hima because they were believed to have aided the RPF.²⁵ Prunier (1995, p.138) writes that these killings were preceded by a radio message from the Minister of Defence demanding that the population ‘trace and arrest those who infiltrate’. An officer of the FAR, interviewed by FIDH, said that several FAR companies were given the order *to clean the zone* between Nyagatare and Kagitumba of all its inhabitants (FIDH, 1993, p.62).

The Tutsi of Kibilira Commune (Gisenyi)

In the second act of mass murder in mid-October 1990, 348 civilians were killed in 48 hours in Kibilira commune in Gisenyi province. (FIDH, 1993, p.20). The report is very clear on the role of the communal authorities. They incited the population under the fabricated story that Tutsi had come to exterminate Hutu. The burgomaster who was taken to prison (and released several weeks later) for his role in the mass murder declared that people should ‘*continue working*’. Independent witness accounts confirm the role played behind the scenes by Léon Mugesera who would two years later deliver racist speeches in Kibilira and neighbouring Gaseke commune. One of the local government agents (*conseiller*) directing the slaughter declared to the investigators that he followed the attackers to guarantee their security. The same Tutsi families in the same commune would fall under attack again in March 1992, at the same time as the massacre in Bugesera (see below) and again in December 1992. On January 10, 1993, the burgomaster of Kibilira said that the program announced by Mugesera had not changed and would resume when the international investigators (who were in Rwanda in January 1993) had left.

²⁵ De Standaard, October 13-14, 1990, p.2.

The massacre in Kibilira happened one week after 8,000 to 10,000 people were taken from the streets and imprisoned in Kigali in the first week of October 1990. Thus, already from the very beginning of the civil war, in the rounding up of many people in the capital and in the two massacres committed in October 1990, we encounter several ingredients that were to characterize subsequent massacres. First, attacks were fabricated and stories were spread to allow the regime to rally support, undertake an operation and incite the population to kill Tutsi civilians; second, the authorities (national or local) took the lead; third, these same authorities lied about the nature of the operation and denied that one ethnic group was targeted; fourth, the operation was legitimated under the veil of assuring security; fifth, the metaphor of ‘work’ was used to describe the killing; and, sixth, national level figures or ideologues monitored the local campaign.

Only at a later stage, towards the end of 1992 and in 1993 would so-called Hutu moderates also be killed in targeted attacks. This sequence is important because some scholars argue that after April 6th 1994 Hutu moderates were the first to be killed. The examination of what took place prior to 1994, however, shows that that provides an incomplete and inaccurate picture of the sequence of events.

The Bagogwe of the North-west (Gisenyi and Ruhengeri)

Between 25 January 1991 and 4 February 1991 (three years before the genocide) a massacre was carried out against a group of Tutsi known as Bagogwe. They used to be – and for the most part still were in 1991 – pastoralists. The Bagogwe preferred to live in the high mountainous regions with good pastures for their cattle. Only recently, with the reduction of pasture land, had they begun to cultivate. At least 300 people (and maximum 1000, FIDH, 1993, p.37) were killed in a series of brutal attacks in several sectors of the north-west of the country, in the prefectures of Gisenyi and Ruhengeri. According to the 1993 report, president

Habyarimana himself presided over the meeting that organized the massacre of the Bagogwe.

I cite from the FIDH report, p.38:

The journalist Janvier Africa worked as an agent for the Central Information Service until the beginning of the war, after which he worked directly for the Presidency. He confirms that he assisted in reunions held by a group known as ‘ Death Squads ‘ (Escadrons de la Mort). He recalls a reunion at 2.00 am in January 1991 before the attack on Ruhengeri by the FPR. Participating in this reunion were Joseph Nzirorera (then Minister of Mines and Handycraft), Charles Nzabagerageza (then préfet of Ruhengeri), Côme Bizimungu (then préfet of Gisenyi) and Casimir Bizimungu (then Minister of Foreign Affairs). After the liberation of the city, they decided to kill the Bagogwe. Colonel Sagatwe, Protais Zigiranyirazo (brother-in-law of the president), member of parliament (député) Rucagu and préfet Nzabagerageza all agreed on that point. Préfet Nzabagerageza should instruct burgomasters to find trustworthy people to do the job. Janvier Africa confirms that it was a big operation that cost 15 million Rwandan francs. The role of Janvier was to verify the results of the operation, to make sure that those who had to be killed really were dead. He showed credible evidence of his participation in the operation.

The reunion that prepared the massacre of the Bagogwe was presided by Juvenal Habyarimana himself, his wife was also present, as well as Colonel Sagatwa and his wife and a traditional truth-teller (sorcier) invited by Sagatwa. Minister Joseph Nzirorera was charged with the delivery of the money to préfet Nzabagerageza.

It was Colonel Elie Sagatwa who proposed the massacre of the Bagogwe and President Habyarimana agreed by nicking his head. Nzirorera, Nzabagerageza and Côme Bizimungu had to look for trustworthy Burgomasters. Once the operation started, one had to make sure that the police participated in order to get the job done. (author’s translation from French text).

When reading about the preparation of the massacre, it is clear that this massacre was not a spontaneous outburst by an anxious population. It was planned and organized by the national leadership. The fear of the RPF was twisted and manipulated by the leadership into an immediate threat to Hutu livelihoods, thereby inducing the Hutu population ‘to act first’. A fake assault – fabricated to legitimize the campaign - worked so well that the immediate reaction of the Hutu population was to flee. The burgomaster had to persuade them to stay and attack their Bagogwe neighbours (Des Forges, p.88). Since the massacre of the Bagogwe was executed right after an attack by the RPF on the centre of Ruhengeri, it seems easy to infer that the massacre was an act of retribution (or revenge) by the Habyarimana regime. However, the advocates of the revenge interpretation fail to explain why the revenge took the

form it did, i.e. the massacre of unarmed civilians. Revenge could have taken several other forms, such as killing Tutsi who were still in prison after the October 1990 raids in Kigali or launching an offensive against the RPF. Throughout the civil war the regime spent a lot of energy attacking and killing the unarmed Tutsi civilian population inside Rwanda. This is what needs to be explained and 'revenge' is far from accomplishing that. The civil war indeed accounts for the timing of the massacre, but it does not explain why these massacres took the form of ethnic cleansing.

The Tutsi of Bugesera (South-Central Rwanda)

In March 1992, authorities organized the killing of several hundred Tutsi in Bugesera, a region located to the south of Kigali where Hutu (from the north-west) and Tutsi (from the south-west), both from densely populated areas in Rwanda, had recently migrated and settled. Map 1 shows how Hutu and Tutsi from the north, but in particular from the south of Rwanda migrated to the new to-be-colonised lands in Bugesera (communes of Ngenda, Kanzenze and Gashora).

Hassan Ngeze, editor of *Kangura* (see below), visited the area several times prior to the massacre and spread tracts and rumours about the danger of the *Inyenzi* (Des Forges 1999, p.89). On March 3, Radio Rwanda issued a warning that Tutsi were going to kill Hutu, in particular Hutu leaders in Bugesera. At that time, Ferdinand Nahimana (see below) was director of the Rwandan Office for Information (ORINFOR) where he supervised Radio Rwanda. The burgomaster of Kanzenze, Mr. Fidèle Rwambuka who played a leading role in the massacre was a member of the Central Committee of the MRND. Rwambuka, who denied knowing about the massacre when interviewed by the FIDH, could count on the support of *interahamwe* (at that time the name for the youth militia of the MRND) dispatched from Kigali and on soldiers from the nearby Gako camp. In Nyamata in Bugesera one can visit the

grave of Sister Locatelli, an Italian Nun who was living there at the time of the massacre. She warned embassies in Kigali that the massacre was taking place and was subsequently killed by the perpetrators.

An experienced observer of Rwanda's history, David Newbury, described the period as follows: 'With the pretence for looking for internal enemies, from late 1990 and early 1991, there were small-scale killings (of several hundred people) and wider roundups of "suspects" within Rwanda. The military leaders learned two principal lessons from this exercise: that such tactics were feasible, and that they generated no meaningful response by outside powers.'²⁶

THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE MASSACRES

A clear pattern characterises the massacres in Kibilira, of the Bagogwe and in Bugesera: Fabricated stories are spread stating that Tutsi killed or planned to kill Hutu; ideologues are present at massacre sites to give speeches or animate meetings; 'trustworthy' burgomasters are enlisted to call meetings with the conseillers; young people and *interahamwe* are dispatched to hunt, pillage and kill. Each time, FIDH and ADL establish a personal and organisational link with the national leadership in Kigali making these massacres all but spontaneous outbursts of violence. Most of these massacres took place in the north-west of the country, where the MRND was strongly supported by the local administrators and the population.²⁷ Habyarimana's home region (Gisenyi and Ruhengeri) had received by far the largest amounts of government subsidies and benefited from the greatest number of government jobs. The other area where a massacre took place was Bugesera, in the rural part

²⁶ Newbury, D., Understanding Genocide, *African Studies Review*, Vol.41, No.1, 1998, p.79

²⁷ Out of 17 incidents of serious violence in the 1990-1993 period, 14 took place in Gisenyi or Ruhengeri (Des Forges, 1999, p.87).

of the province of Kigali, a region that had only recently been populated by Hutu from Gisenyi and Ruhengeri, as well as by Tutsi from Gikongoro and Butare.

The strong support for the MRND is not the only element that distinguishes these provinces and communes. Gisenyi and Ruhengeri are by far the most densely populated provinces in Rwanda. In 1991, accounting for the forested areas in both provinces, Gisenyi counted 735.000 people on 1.350 square km of cultivable land which is 560 persons per square km and Ruhengeri 532 persons per square km. This is almost twice the average of the other provinces.²⁸ The average size of a farm in Gisenyi (0.45 hectare) was by far the smallest compared to the other provinces. The communes in Gisenyi where the violence against Tutsi was orchestrated, Kibilira, and in later instances of violence also the commune of Mutura, have the highest percentages of Tutsi (8.6 and 9.7% of the population respectively) in the province. For the province of Ruhengeri, the communes of Kinigi (3.7%) and Mukingo (2.1%), where Bagogwe were killed, had the highest percentage of Tutsi in Ruhengeri. Kanzenze commune in recently settled Bugesera had the highest percent of Tutsi of the entire province of Rural Kigali (31%).²⁹ Recall that the Hima of the savannah in northern Byumba were a pastoral people who were recently settled into ranches as part of a large land re-settlement program. Thus, these first massacres occurred in places combining the following features:

- strong MRND support among local authorities and/or population
- most densely populated areas in rural Rwanda or recently (re-)settled area
- communes chosen had highest percentage of Tutsi in the province

²⁸ Only urban centres had an even higher density, but there people do not live of the land. Gisenyi is also the location of the fieldwork undertaken by C.André in 1988 and 1993. She found an extreme pressure on land which even deteriorated in just 5 years. The resulted in many conflicts over land and a large number of landless or quasi-landless peasants whose farm size was too small to make a living, to feed the family and to offer land to sons who wanted to marry.

²⁹ The source of these % is the 1983 count of the population by ethnicity in the administrative records kept at the commune level.

In other parts of Rwanda, a smaller number of Tutsi were killed (compared to the four massacres described above) in the 1990-1992 period. At those places, we find evidence of the same logic as in the massacres sites above:

- *Communes of Rwamatamu and Gishyita in Kibuye province: higher than average population density and very high percentage of Tutsi;
- * the region of Nasho in commune Rusumo (Kibungo province): pastoralist population settled after 1982 expulsion from Uganda. Pastoralists killed by FAR soldiers and members of the local *paysannat*;
- * Sector Rwanbuka in commune Murambi, Byumba province: MRND stronghold with burgomaster originating from the sector where the killings occur and;
- * Commune Mugina, Gitarama province: the killing of a Tutsi specifically to occupy his pastoral land.³⁰

What is evident is that immediately after the beginning of the October 1990 civil war, Tutsi are targeted and killed in local massacres. More specifically, the places where these massacres of the Hima, Bagogwe and Tutsi were committed in the 1990-1992 period are located on the land frontier, in recently settled areas or in *paysannat* settlement schemes. Several of the places where the early massacres occurred such as in Mutara (northern Byumba), Kinigi, Mukingo, Bugesera and Rusumo were places where *paysannats* had been established. In fact, 10 out of the 19 communes where massacres occurred in the period 1990-1992 were communes with a *paysannat* settlement schemes (see Table 1 and Map 3). As Rwanda had 17 communes with *paysannats*, which is 12% of all 145 communes, this means that 59% (10/17)

³⁰ Association Rwandaise pour la Défense des Droits de la Personne et des Libertés Publiques, *Rapport sur les droits de l'homme au Rwanda*, Kigali; décembre 1992, 353p. This report uses the word 'genocide' at several occasions to describe the massacres. Also FIDH (1993, p.52-55)

of the communes having such a settlement scheme were hit by a massacre. This figure needs to be compared with the probability of a massacre in communes without *paysannats*, which was 7 per cent (9/128), an enormous difference.³¹ In Gashora - a commune neighbouring Kanzenze in Bugesera - where part of the March 1992 killings occurred, a model-village was established for model farmers with rectangular houses built in a grid of straight roads.

In the former *paysannat* visited during the fieldwork in Gitarama in 2004 mentioned above, the agronomist, the agricultural surveyor and the agricultural monitors became the leaders of the killing operations in the 1994 genocide. The agents of the Developmental State become the perpetrators of genocide.

In Kanzenze (Bugesera), the commune most touched by the March 1992 massacre, two thirds of the population lived in a *paysannat* (Bart, p382). The early massacres inscribe themselves in a logic of land colonisation, re-settlement, depredation and deprivation of cattle and land in areas where the land constraint was biting the most and where peasant society was being re-modelled in a rational, geometric way.³² These early massacres can thus be described and understood as acts of spatial and social engineering through ethnic cleansing: the removal of pastoralist groups from the land in order to occupy the land for food cultivation, *paysannats* settlement schemes and export crop production. In times of civil war, the Tutsi need not be re-settled, there is no space for them anyway, they can be killed.

Just as there was no space anymore for pastoralism after the 1959 revolution and no space for Tutsi refugees in the seventies and eighties, there was now no space anymore for Tutsi inside Rwanda. Delicate operations such as massacres could, at that time, only be executed in MRND strongholds. The massacres occurred in strongholds with very high

³¹ The comparison becomes 45% (10/22) compared to 7.3% (9/123) when including the very small *paysannats* located in the province capitals. The Chi-square statistic is 35.35 with 1 degree of freedom and a p-value of 0, meaning that the result cannot be ascribed to chance.

³² Just how tough the effects of the land constraint were can best be understood in a paper by C.André and J.-Ph.Platteau (1998).The field work for their paper was undertaken in 1988 and 1993 on a hill in Gisenyi province. Verwimp, P. (2005) presents an economic profile of perpetrators.

population pressure, high percentages of Tutsi compared to the provincial level and in areas with previous experience of land colonisation and resettlement such as the *paysannats*. They were executed as *umuganda*, the obligatory communal labour. The policy of communal labour was introduced by Habyarimana in 1975 to re-establish the value of manual labour. It gave local authorities a lot of sway over the peasant population, which they used to mobilize for the killings.

Figure 1:

Growth (in %) of the number of people living in Rwanda and in the Paysannats 1973-1983

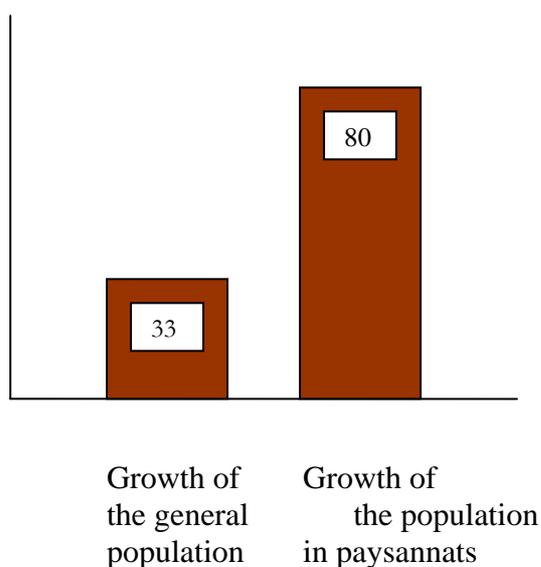


Table 1:

Number of Communes (N=145), Communes with a Paysannat and with a Massacre 1990-1992

| Communes with a Paysannat | Communes with a Massacre 1990-1993 | Communes with a Paysannat and a Massacre |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| 17/145* | 19/145** | 10/17*** |
| 12% | 13% | 59% |

* Bart (1993, p.394) with at least 1.000 hh
 ** Des Forges (1999, p.87); Reyntjens (1994, p.186) and ADL (1992)
 *** These 10 communes are: Muvumba in northern Byumba; Mukingo, Nkuli and Kinigi in Ruhengeri; Mutura and Karago in Gisenyi; Kanzenze, Gashora and Ngenda in Rural Kigali and Rusumo in Kibungo. *Pearson Chi-square test (1) =35.35 with p=0.000*

CONCLUSION

This paper has put forth a third, alternative interpretation of the massacres that were perpetrated in Rwanda prior to the 1994 genocide. This interpretation, which is based on the

Peasant-State's ideology of excluding the pastoralist groups from the realm of the state, re-modelling the agrarian space and colonising new land, challenges, or at least complements, the two prevailing interpretations in the literature.

The Bahima and the Bagogwe had not sought to take on positions of power in the state; indeed, they had sought to stay away from the influence of state power. Prunier (1995, p.169) writes that, in the context of Rwanda, the Bagogwe were poorer than average. They lived off their cattle on the little pastoral land that was left. However, the state would not leave them alone. In the commune of Mukingo, in the northwest of the country, a *paysannat* was established on their land, whereby contracts were signed with farmers with a view to the growing of pyrethrum for export. In the northeast, ranches were created for their cattle as part of a large-scale rural development program. Whatever the specific form in which case was, the point is that no-one could escape the Second Republic's drive to register, handle, monitor and develop its people. The 1990-92 massacres took place in communes where there was already a substantial experience of spatial and social engineering on the part of the Second Republic, and where agrarian space had been significantly re-modelled from above. Then, in the context of the civil war, spatial and social engineering went a step further, meaning that the pastoralists were killed rather than re-settled. The fate of Rwanda's Bahima and Bagogwe pastoralists illustrates the nature of the developmental state: 'seeing like a state', the regime decided that these pastoralists should be removed from the body politic. The cover of the civil war was thus used to rid specific areas of their pastoral inhabitants. The regime denied that any massacres had taken place and instead described the events as either spontaneous outbursts of violence (when far from the battle front) or as war operations (when close to the front).

The Habyarimana regime used up all the available land in Rwanda. The regime got to this point by way of an extensive land strategy – turning land that was used for pastures into

agricultural land and colonising new (often marginal) land, mainly through the *paysannats* settlement scheme. The primacy of agriculture over pastoralism was a key outcome of the Hutu Revolution, as shown by the abolishing of Ibikingi rights and the subsequent cultivation of pastoral lands. The Rwandan State intervened strongly in land management, not least through the establishment of *paysannats* and the expropriation of households with a view to the creation of tea plantations. This policy was met with resentment, given that farmers on the land frontier were forced to move and ended up with smaller parcels. In 1986, the Central Committee of the MRND refused the return of Tutsi refugees from Uganda, arguing there was no space for them. In 1989 and 1990, Habyarimana maintained that many of the country's problems, such as famine, were the result of population growth.

The Habyarimana regime adopted a policy of agricultural extensification, as opposed to intensification. This meant turning all available land (such as pastures, marches and forests) into cultivable land. In Rwanda, this policy came up against its limits in the late 1980s, as all the land had by then been taken over. It is therefore important to note that, by 1991, most Bagogwe were still pastoralists. They preferred to live in the high mountainous regions, where there were good pastures for their cattle. Only more recently, with the reduction in pastoral land, did they begin to cultivate. Pastoralists such as the Hima and the Bagogwe live off cattle and the trade in cattle products. They do not cultivate and are therefore considered a non-agricultural group. Pastoralism as a way of life did not fit in the agrarian order of the Second Republic, which was based on hard-working smallholder peasants. The regime used the opportunity provided by the civil war in order to claim the last remaining parcels of land by removing the last remnants of pastoralism in Rwanda. This was perfectly in line with the prevailing ideology of the Second Republic, i.e. that Rwanda was and would always remain an agrarian nation of hard-working peasants. The point was not that the Hima, the Bagogwe and the Tutsi owned cattle (for many rich Hutu and the dignitaries of the Habyarimana regime

did so, too), but that their pastoralist livelihood did not fit in the Peasant-State. Peasant cultivation and rural life can be romanticized, but when this ideology is combined with racism towards ethnic groups regarded as non-peasant, such as the Tutsi, this ideology can take on a vicious character.³³ Thus, in view of all of the above, these massacres can be adequately described as a case of ethnic cleansing.

The international commission that wrote the FIDH report of March 1993 discussed the applicability of the term 'genocide' in the case of the massacres that it described in detail. Then, in a report dated August 1993, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Summary, Arbitrary and Extrajudicial Executions concluded that the killings did indeed constitute an instance of genocide according to the terms of the 1948 Convention on Genocide.

This paper has argued that the intention to kill a group of people for who they are (the core element of the definition of genocide according to the 1948 Convention) was clearly present from the beginning of the civil war: the Bahima, the Bagogwe, and the Tutsi were targeted because of their pastoralist character and because they were regarded as belonging to a different (Nilo-Hamitic) race. The leaders of the Second Republic espoused a racial ideology and the acts of mass murder that they perpetrated cannot be properly understood outside this racist paradigm.

President Habyarimana denied that any massacres had taken place in the case of both the Hima (in October 1990) and the Bagogwe (in August 1991), just as a year earlier he had denied that there had been a famine in Gikongoro.³⁴ This denial of harm, suffering or killing is a part of the classic repertoire of the perpetrators of genocide. Genocide is the result of a gradual policy involving identification, hate propaganda, the militarisation of society,

³³ A strong example of the ideology in the mind of the organisers of genocide is found in an essay written by Colonel T. Bagosora after the genocide (Yaoundé, Oct.1995). He writes that the civil war was an ethnic war of Hutu against Tutsi and that the Tutsi are a nilothic people of immigrants without a country of their own. They have tried to impose their supremacy on the rightful original inhabitants.

³⁴ De Standaard, 1990, October 13-14, p.2 for the denial of the massacre of the Hima and Des Forges, 1999, p.90-91 for the denial of the massacre of the Bagogwe.

resource allocation and so on. The 1993 FIDH report revealed the existence of a high-level committee behind the mass murders. This group met on several occasions, enabling its members to address a number of issues and organize the subsequent events. The meeting in which the massacre of the Bagogwe was decided also discussed the means that were to be used in the operation (FIDH, p.38). These means consisted of trustworthy burgomasters, 15 million RWF and the help of police officers. By the time that the leaders of the regime took the decision to go ahead and execute the mass murders, they already had a pretty good idea of how to do it.

This article has sought to highlight the social and geographical features of the massacres that were perpetrated in Rwanda in the early 1990s. These features, along with the available evidence on the motives and organisation behind the violence, are clearly indicative of an agrarian logic underlying the massacres, which cannot be satisfactorily explained as a defensive reaction to imminent invasion or as preparation for a wider genocidal project. Rather, to a significant extent these massacres were rooted in the crisis of an ideological programme and its associated policies. The massacres took place in locations chosen for their particular characteristics, the strong level of support enjoyed by the MRND, their very high population density, the fact that there was a relatively high percentage of Tutsi and their recent history of land colonisation or of remodelling of the agrarian space into *paysannat* settlement schemes. Under the cover of the civil war, it was here that the regime unveiled its darker side: that of a Peasant-State unleashing its full violent potential against people considered to be non-peasants.

REFERENCES

- Adelman, H. and A. Shurki, 1996. *Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda*.
Copenhagen: Danida.
- Akresh, R., P. Verwimp and T. Bundervoet, 2011. 'Crop Failure, Civil War and Child Stunting'. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, forthcoming.
- Andre, C. and J.P. Platteau, 1997. 'Land Relations under Unbearable Stress: Rwanda Caught in the Malthusian Trap'. *Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organization*, 34 (1): 1-55.
- Association Rwandaise pour la Défense des Droits de la Personne et des Libertés Publiques, 1992. *Rapport Sur Les Droits De L'homme Au Rwanda*. Kigali.
- Bart, F., 1993. *Montagnes D'afrique, Terres Paysannes, Le Cas Du Rwanda*. Bordeaux: Presse Universitaire de Bordeaux.
- Berlage, L., H. Eyssen, M. Goedhuys, L. Sleuwagen and D.V.d. Bulcke, 1993. *Rwanda: Disequilibrium, Reform and the Manufacturing Sector. Country Background Paper*. Washington D.C.: World Bank.
- Bézy, F., 1990. *Rwanda: Bilan Socio-Économique D'un Régime. 1962—1989*. Louvain: Institut d'Etude des Pays en Développement - Université de Louvain-la-Neuve.
- Brandstetter, A.M., 1997. 'Ethnic or Socio-Economic Conflict? Political Interpretations of the Rwandan Crisis'. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, 4, 3-4: 427-49.
- Brandstetter, A.M., 2001, Die Rhetorik von Reinheit, Gewalt und Gemeinschaft: Bürgerkrieg und Genozid in Rwanda, *Sociologus* 51: 48-84.
- De Standaard, Daily Newspaper, 13, 14 and 15 October 1990, Groot-Bijgaarden, Belgium
- Desforges, A., 1999. *Leave None to Tell the Story*. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Guichaoua, A., 1991. 'Les Travaux Communautaires En Afrique Centrale'. *Revue Tiers Monde*, XXXII (127): 551-73.

- Guichaoua, A., 1997. *Les Antécédents Politiques De La Crise Rwandaise De 1994*. Rapport d'Expertise Rédigé a la Demande du Tribunal Penal International des Nations Unies sur le Rwanda. Arusha.
- Habyarimana, J., 1974. 'Discours, Messages Et Entretiens'. Kigali: ORINFOR.
- International Federation of Human Rights Organisations -FIDH, 1993. *Rapport De La Commission D'enquête Sur Les Violations Des Droits De L'homme Au Rwanda Depuis Le 1er Octobre 1990*, Paris
- Jefremovas, V., 1991. 'Loose Women, Virtuous Wives and Timid Virgins: Gender and Control of Resources in Rwanda'. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 25 (3): 378-95.
- Kangura, 1990, Rwandan monthly magazine, n.2, June, Kigali.
- Kiernan, B., 2007. *Blood and Soil*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Lemarchand, R., 2002. 'Disconnecting the threads: Rwanda and the Holocaust reconsidered'. *Journal of Genocide Studies*, 4(4):499-518
- Little, P.D. and M. Horowitz, 1987. 'Agricultural Policy and Practice in Rwanda'. *Human Organisation*, 46(3): 254-9.
- Little, P.D. and M. Horowitz, 1988. 'Agricultural Policy and Practice in Rwanda'. *Human Organisation*, 47(3): 271-3.
- Mann, M., 2005. *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mazower, M., 1998. *The Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*. New York: Knopf.
- McDoom, O., 2009. *The Micro-Politics of Mass Violence: Authority, Security, and Opportunity in Rwanda's Genocide*. London: Doctoral Dissertation, LSE.
- Nahimana, F., 1988. 'Conscience Chez-Nous, Confiance En Nous: Notre Culture Est La Base De Notre Developpement Harmonieux'. Ruhengeri: Presse National du Rwanda.
- Nairn, T., 1998. 'Reflections on Nationalist Disasters'. *New Left Review* 1/203: 145-52.

- Nathan, L., 2005 *The Frightful Inadequacy of Most of the Statistics: A Critique of Collier and Hoeffler on Causes of Civil War*. Crisis States Research Centre Discussion Paper 11. London: LSE.
- Newbury, C., 1992. 'Recent Debates on Governance and Rural Development'. In *Governance and Politics in Africa*, eds. M. Bratton and G. Hyden. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Newbury, D., 1998. 'Understanding Genocide'. *African Studies Review*, 41 (1):73-97
- Nsengiyaremye, D., 1995. 'La Transition Démocratique Au Rwanda (1989-1993)'. In *Les Crises Politiques Au Burundi Et Au Rwanda (1993-1994)*, ed. A. Guichaoua: Université de Lille/ Kathala, Paris
- Ntamahungiro, J., 1988. 'Eloge Du Paysan Rwandais'. *Dialogue*, (130).
- Ocir-Café, 1992. *Proces-Verbal De La Reunion Du Conseil D'administration De L'office Des Cafés, Mars 25*. Kigali.
- Olson, J.M., 1990. 'The Impact of Changing Socio-Economic Factors on Migration Patterns in Rwanda'. Ann Arbor: Ph.D Dissertation, Michigan State University.
- Pinchotti, S. and P. Verwimp, 2007. *Social Capital and the Rwandan Genocide: A Micro-Level Analysis*. Working Paper 30. Brighton: Households in Conflict Network.
- Platteau, J.P., 2000. *Institutions, Social Norms and Economic Development*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Pottier, J., 1993. 'Taking Stock, Food Marketing Reform in Rwanda 1982-1989'. *African Affairs* 92 (366): 5-30.
- Prunier, G., 1995. *The Rwanda Crises: History of a Genocide*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Raleigh, C., A. Link, H. Hegre and J. Karlsen, 2010. 'Introducing Acled: An Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset: Special Data Feature'. *Journal of Peace Research*, 47: 651-60.
- Reyntjens, F., 1994. *L'Afrique Des Grands Lacs En Crise 1988-1994*. Paris: Karthala.
- Salih, M., T. Dietz and A.G.M. Ahmed, 2001. *African Pastoralism, Conflict, Institutions and Government*. London: Pluto Press.
- Scott, J., (), Yale University Press, 1998. *Seeing Like a State, How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Sibomana, A., 1999. *Hope for Rwanda: Conversations with Laure Guilbert and Hervé Deguine*. London and Sterling, Va: Pluto Press.
- Strauss, S., 2006. 'The Order of Genocide'. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Tardiff, D., J.L.Ngirumwami, J.Shaffer, A.Murekezi and T.Kampayana, 1993. *Apercu Sur La Politique Cafeicole Á Rwanda*. Kigali.
- United Nations, 1993, *special rapporteur's report on Rwanda*, August, New York
- US Department of State, 1993, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Report submitted to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House and the Senate*, February
- Uvin, P., 1998. *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.
- Verwimp, P., 2002. *The Ruriganiza Famine in Southern Rwanda: A Prelude to Genocide?* Discussion Paper 02.07. Leuven: Centre for Economic Studies.
- Verwimp, P., 2003. 'The Political Economy of Coffee, Dictatorship and Genocide'. *European Journal of Political Economy*, 19: 161-81.
- Verwimp, P., 2005. 'An Economic Profile of Perpetrators of Genocide'. *Journal of Development Economics*, 77: 297-323.

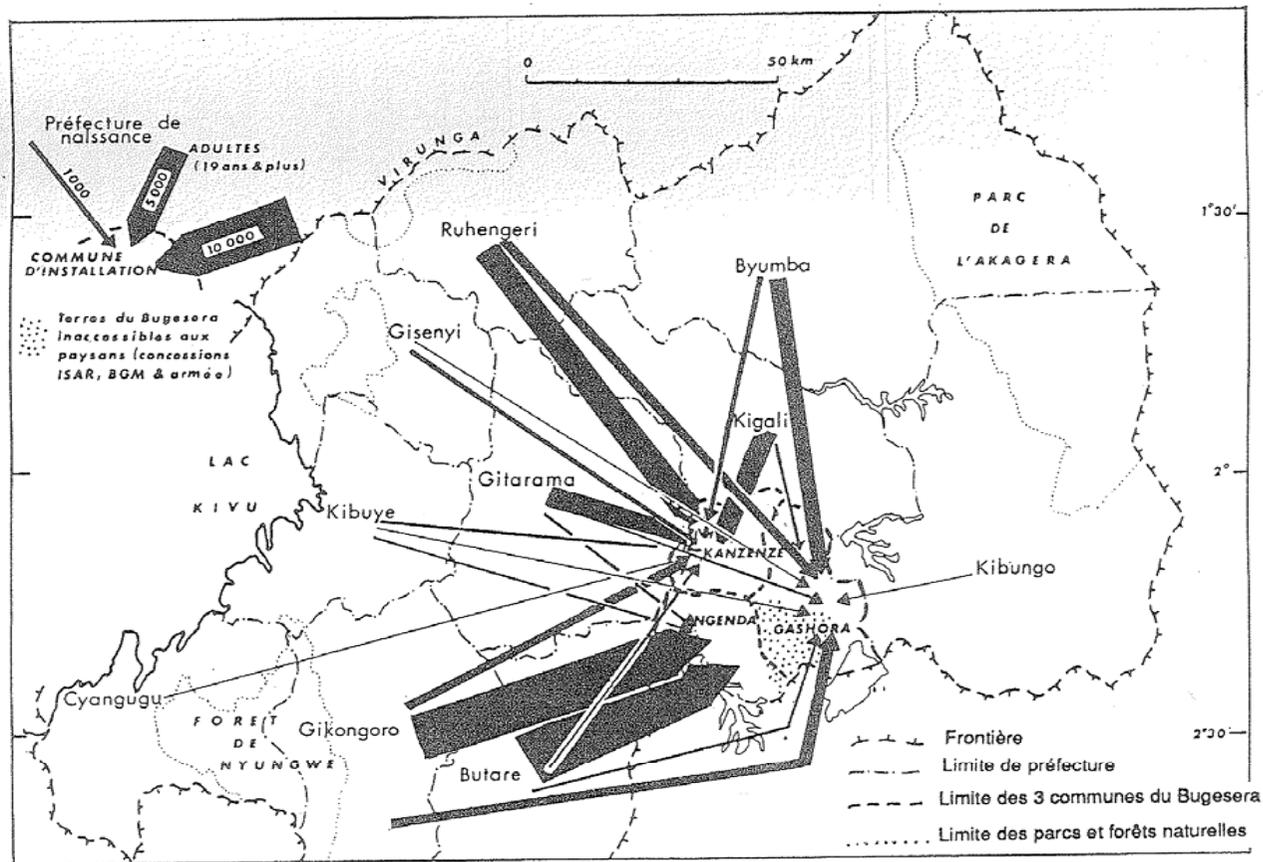
Verwimp, P. 2006. 'The one who refuses to work is harmful to society ' first published in 1999 as Working Paper of the Genocide Studies Program, Yale University and in 2000 in the Journal of Genocide Research (2)3:325-361. The 2006 version is online at www.hicn.org

Von Braun, J., H.d. Haen and J. Blanken, 1991. *Commercialisation of Agriculture under Population Pressure, Effects on Production, Consumption and Nutrition in Rwanda*. Research Report 85. Washington D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Willame, J.C., 1995. *Au Sources De L'hécatombe Rwandaise*. Paris: Institut Africain, Editions l'Harmattan.

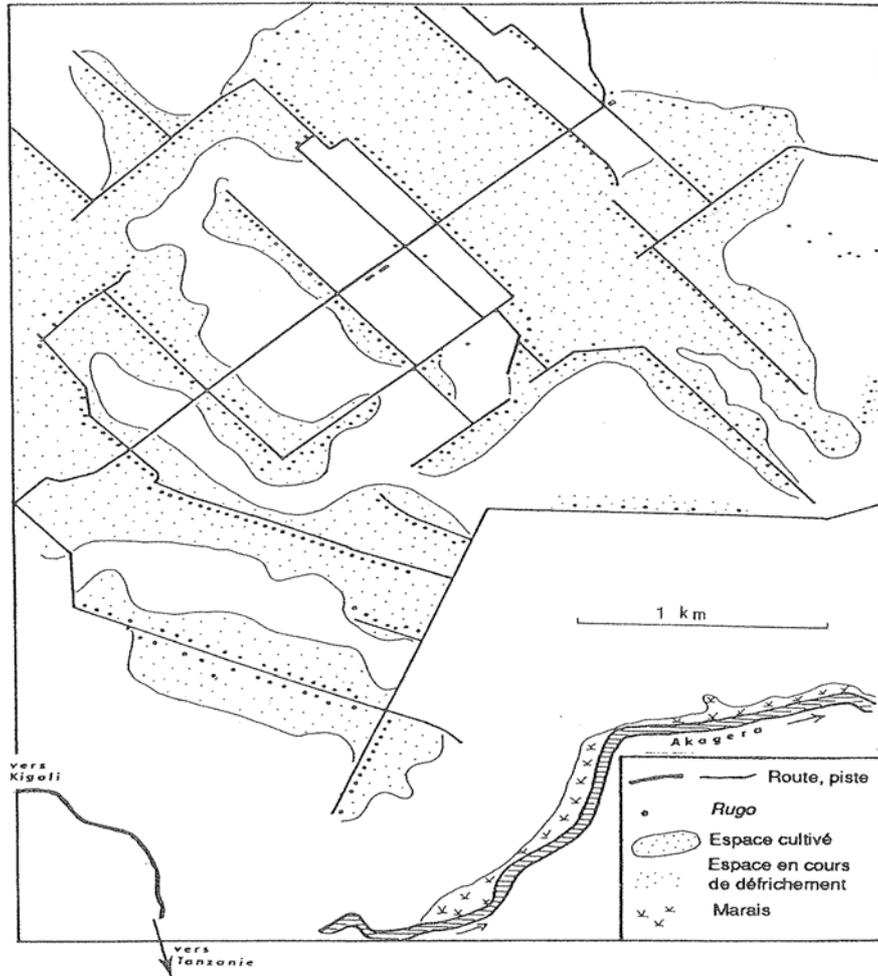
World Bank, 1991. *Rwanda: Agricultural Strategy Review*. Washington D.C.: World Bank

Map 1: Internal Migration Paths and the Colonisation of the Bugesera, source: Bart (1993)



Map 2: The Paysannat of Rusumo, province of Kibungo

Source, Bart (1993)



Map 3: Paysannat and Massacre Sites in Rwanda ((1990-1992). A circle represents a Paysannat, source: Bart (1993). A cross represents a Massacre, sources as under

