

RESEARCH COMMISSION ON THE FRENCH ARCHIVES
RELATED TO RWANDA AND THE TUTSI GENOCIDE

France, Rwanda and the Tutsi Genocide (1990-1994)

*Report submitted to the President of the Republic on 26 March,
2021*

[The French version should be the one to refer to]

<https://www.vie-publique.fr/rapport/279186-rapport-duclert-la-france-le-rwanda-et-le-genocide-des-tutsi-1990-1994>. (Website: vie-publique.fr)

*Hard Copy: La France, Le Rwanda et Le génocide des Tutsi (1990-1994).
Rapport au président de La République de La Commission de recherche,
Paris, Armand Colin, 2021.*

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Introductory Note

The Report presented here was written and adopted by the entire Commission for Research on the French Archives Relating to Rwanda and the Tutsi Genocide. It is the result of two years of work in the French archives and collective research. It was submitted to the President of the Republic on 26 March, 2021, and immediately made public in accordance with the decision taken at the creation of the Commission on 5 April, 2019. The Report is accessible in full on the website of the Presidency of the Republic and, by regulation, on that of the DILA (formerly the French Documentation Service), as well as on the institutional website of the Commission and on that of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs. A summary in English was distributed simultaneously.

The internal organization of the manuscript allows easy access to its contents, thanks to a detailed table of contents, chapter introductions and conclusions, and the general introduction that follows, as well as the final conclusions. In keeping with the Research Commission's commitment, the publication of its Report was followed on 7 April, 2021, by public access to the Report's sources in the form of full-length facsimiles of the entire archive that was reviewed by the Research Commission, both classified and unclassified material*. This collection of sources is available in the reading room of the National Archives, accessible for research. In order to ensure equal access to the sources, tools to facilitate research are provided. In accordance

with the objective also assigned to the Commission, to promote the opening of French archives on Rwanda and the Tutsi genocide, at its initiative, the fonds constituted are also included in the general exemption signed by the Prime Minister. The opening of the public archives concerns the fonds for President François Mitterrand and Prime Minister Édouard Balladur. At the Commission's initiative, the archivists of the concerned archival centers have established a catalogue of sources of public fonds on Rwanda and the Tutsi genocide, and ensured the online availability of documentation specific to the event of the Arusha Agreements and to Rwandan political life (including the RPF).

The Report was published simultaneously by the Armand Colin publishing house, which has long been involved in the dissemination of scholarly knowledge on genocide, with the copyright belonging to public research.

**The list of documents contained in the source boxes, freely accessible to all at the National Archives, is included in the digital appendices of the Report. It totals nearly 8,000 documents, all of which have been made available and declassified beforehand if necessary (in fact, classified documents no longer appear as such since they were declassified at the request of the Commission). These source boxes do not contain copies of the documents used in the presidential and Prime Minister Édouard Balladur fonds, since these are fully open. We invite readers to refer to them.*

**LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC ADDRESSED
TO PROF. VINCENT DUCLERT ON APRIL 5, 2019**

Dear Professor Duclert,

On April 7th 2019, France will join Rwanda in commemorating the 25th anniversary of the genocide of the Tutsi. In just one hundred days, this tragic event resulted in nearly a million deaths that the international community failed to prevent. France has always endeavored to honor the memory of the victims and to commend the dignity of the survivors, as well as the Rwandan people's capacity for reconciliation.

I hope that this 25th anniversary will mark a true turning point in the way France understands and teaches about the Tutsi genocide, and that it will lead to a better understanding of the pain of the victims and the aspirations of the survivors.

In keeping with the promise I made on May 24th 2018, when I met with President Paul Kagame in Paris, I firmly believe that the genocide of the Tutsi should have the place it deserves in our collective memory. This must first be done by deepening our knowledge and understanding of this terrifying operation of human destruction, with a view towards teaching it in France and educating the younger generations to be vigilant. « The Mission of Study on the Research and Teaching of Genocides and Mass Crimes, » which you presided over, laid the first foundation for this with the decision to include the genocide of the Tutsi in the curriculum of the final year of high school.

This was an important step. It must now be accompanied by a work devoted to the study of all French archives concerning Rwanda, between 1990 and 1994. I intend to entrust this task to a commission of French researchers, which you will chair.

The objectives of this commission will be the following:

- 1. Examine all French archival collections concerning the pre-genocidal period and the genocide itself;*
- 2. Draft a report that will:*
 - propose a historian's critical understanding of the sources being examined;*
 - analyze France's role and engagement in Rwanda during this period, taking into account the role of other actors who were also engaged during this period;*
 - contribute to a more in-depth knowledge of the causes and unfolding of the genocide of the Tutsi, in order to achieve a better understanding of this historical tragedy and ensure its inclusion into the collective memory, particularly by younger generations.*

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This report should be completed within two years, with an intermediary memorandum scheduled in one year.

In order to carry out your mission, you and the other members of the committee will be subject to an exceptional, personal and confidential access and consultation procedure for all French archives concerning Rwanda between 1990 and 1994 (the archives of the Presidency of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Ministry for Armed Forces and the French Parliamentary Commission on Rwanda).

You may count on the means that the related Ministries will place at your disposal – the Ministry of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation – as well as the archival services of the institutions concerned.

I wish you every success in the accomplishment of this important mission. Please accept, Professor, the expression of my distinguished consideration. With my gratitude and full confidence [manuscript]

Emmanuel MACRON

**COMPOSITION OF THE RESEARCH COMMISSION
ON THE FRENCH ARCHIVES RELATING TO RWANDA
AND THE GENOCIDE OF THE TUTSI*.**

- Mr. Vincent Duclert, researcher and former director of the CESPRA (CNRS-EHESS), professor at Sciences-Po, Inspector General of National Education, President of the Commission;

- Mrs. Catherine Bertho Lavenir, professor emeritus of the Sorbonne-Nouvelle University, honorary inspector general of national education, paleographic archivist;

- Mr. David Dominé-Cohn, associate professor of history and geography, specialist in military archives and operations;

- Ms. Isabelle Ernot, professor of history and geography, PhD in contemporary history, specialist in the Shoah, member of the French Study Mission on Research and Teaching of Genocide and Mass Crimes;

- Mr. Thomas Hochmann, professor of public law at the University of Paris Nanterre, member of the IUF, specialist in constitutional law;

- Ms. Sylvie Humbert, professor of legal history at the Catholic University of Lille, specialist in international criminal justice;

- Mr. Raymond H. Kévorkian, director of research emeritus at the University of Paris 8, specialist in the Armenian genocide, member of the French Study Mission on Research and Teaching of Genocide and Mass Crimes;

- Mr. Erik Langlinay, associate professor of history, PhD in contemporary history, specialist in wartime organizations;

- Mrs. Chantal Morelle, professor in “classes préparatoires”, PhD in contemporary history, specialist in the Fifth Republic, its diplomacy and General de Gaulle;

- Mr. Guillaume Pollack, associate professor of history and geography, PhD in history, specialist in resistance networks and secret services;

- Mr. Etienne Rouannet, associate professor of history-geography, doctoral student, specialist in state archives and their documentary processing;

- Ms. Françoise Thébaud, professor emeritus in contemporary history at the University of Avignon, specialist in the Great War, women and gender;

- Ms. Sandrine Weil, doctoral student in contemporary history, specialist in image resources, member of the French Study Mission on Research and Teaching of Genocide and Mass Crimes.

*Annette Wiewiorka, director of research emeritus at the CNRS, a member of the Commission at its creation, wished to withdraw on 13 September, 2019, noting the heavy workload that this responsibility implied in relation to her own research;

Ms. Christelle Jouhanneau asked to withdraw from the work of the Commission on 8 July, 2020, for professional reasons related to her duties as a regional education inspector in the Versailles academy;

Ms. Julie d'Andurain, a university professor, requested to be removed from the Commission's work on 28 August, 2020 for personal reasons;

Mr. Christian Vigouroux, President of a section of the Council of State, former associate professor of public law at the Universities of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne and Versailles-Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, announced to the Commission, working in-person, that he was leaving the Commission on 28 February, 2021, due to health risks, his outside responsibilities and a disagreement on the organization of the final phase of drafting the report and drawing up its conclusions.

**LETTER OF SUBMISSION OF THE REPORT OF THE RESEARCH
COMMISSION ON THE FRENCH ARCHIVES RELATED TO RWANDA AND
THE TUTSI GENOCIDE (1990-1994)
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC,
BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION**

Dear Mr. President,

In response to your mission letter dated April 5th, 2019, I have the honor to submit to you the Report that was assigned to the Research Commission on the French archives related to Rwanda and the Tutsi Genocide.

The objective of encouraging a wide opening of the archives on the subject has also been achieved. Beginning April 7th, 2021, the boxes containing copies of all the archives that the Commission examined as sources for the Report will be made available to the public at the National Archives, with the anticipatory opening, through a general waiver, of the relevant Presidential (François Mitterrand) and Prime Ministerial (Edouard Balladur) archives.

The unusual format of the Report is explained not only by the extensive scope of archival sources that were examined, but also by the complexity of events and the necessity of methodological, exhaustive (concerning the examined sources), contextualized and critical research. This Report formulates conclusions, based on collective research, on a crucial issue: France, Rwanda, and the genocide of the Tutsi.

The Research Commission, in full agreement of all its members, presents you with the scientific document you are waiting for and which you have undertaken to make public immediately, whatever its content, so that it may serve for the appeasement of memory and universal history. It is, in fact, the duty of scholars to answer the profound, human questions that people and societies ask themselves. Among these, genocides in the century that is theirs and that continues uninterrupted, genocides and the duty to respond to them, to resist them and even to fight them wherever they occur, with the forces of knowledge and public opinion found within democracies. A reflection on this subject is vital now, more than seventy years after the adoption by the United Nations, in Paris, of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, conceived by the jurist and historian

Raphael Lemkin. A new age of resistance to genocide and mass crimes must begin.

France, through its civilian and military administrations, has the means to achieve this ambition, starting with the mobilization of knowledge. This assumes the requisite for verified information, public documentation and intensive research. The creation of La Documentation française, on October 19th, 1945, by women and men from General de Gaulle's government in London and Algiers, gave concrete form to the thought of freedom of the Republic and Resistance. Now part of the Direction of Legal and Administrative Information (DILA), it will be responsible for making the Report of the Research Commission available to everyone (vie-publique.fr), thanks to its digital means of the 21st century.

You have honored us with your trust. I am grateful for that. I also thank you for the support from the services of your Cabinet, the Prime Minister, ministers and state administrations, starting with the archivists of the Republic and the delegation of the CNRS in Villejuif for the material component. Finally, my thanks go to the members of the Commission who have done an exemplary job under difficult conditions, always with a concern for accuracy and understanding, so as not to "add to the misfortune of this world," as Albert Camus wrote in 1944. This is the mission of researchers.

The grandeur of a state is measured by the support it gives to research, for the future of peaceful societies in France and in the world. In the face of disasters, knowledge is not in vain when it gains in freedom and in reach, at least we believe so. We expect you, Mr. President, to reiterate this at the highest level of the Republic, which needs scholars and reason in its society.

The political follow-up to this Report is up to you, it is up to French women and men who expect their country to pay new attention to Africa, in order to build together the democratic and egalitarian world of tomorrow.

Respectfully yours,

*Paris, March 26, 2021
Professor Vincent Duclert*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Research Commission wishes to express its sincere gratitude. This extends first of all to the President of the Republic, who has placed his trust in research and in researchers for a work of historical truth and for the appeasement of memories.

The Africa advisor at the Élysée Palace has facilitated the work of the Commission and has always recognized its full independence.

The Ministries of Europe and Foreign Affairs, of the Armed Forces, of Higher Education, of Research and Innovation, of National Education, of Youth and Sports, of Culture, and of Justice have allowed the Commission to function in optimal material conditions. The team of the Ile de France Villejuif delegation of the CNRS and that of the garden annex at the Ministry of the Armed Forces on rue Saint Dominique spared no effort, and we are also very grateful to them. As with the President of the Republic, all these ministries and central administrations have recognized the independence of the Commission and have wished it success in its mission.

The directors of the archive centers and all their personnel gave a warm welcome to the members of the team. They played a central role in making documents available and always responded patiently and professionally to requests made by the Commission. The latter is aware of the considerable efforts involved in all the requests for declassification and dissemination of the archives used.

In the final phase of the material production of the book, the history editor and the head of production at Armand Colin provided invaluable assistance.

The interviews generously granted by researchers and former actors on the question of archives, their production as well as their analysis, allowed the Commission to deepen its understanding of a certain number of questions. The Commission is grateful to these colleagues for their trust.

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Introduction

The creation, on 15 April, 2019, of the Commission for Research on the French Archives Relating to Rwanda and the Tutsi Genocide (1990-1994) and the Report that is expected as a result stem from a dizzying question that is obvious to all.

When France became involved in Rwanda in October 1990, its ambition was to work towards the democratization of the country, in accordance with the guidelines laid out by President Mitterrand at the African summit in La Baule. It then encouraged the conclusion of peace agreements between the Rwandan government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). On 4 August, 1993, these objectives were realized with the signing of the Arusha Accords, under which UN peacekeepers took over from the French military presence. A few months later, however, on 7 April, 1994, Rwanda plunged into genocide. The Tutsi of this country were exterminated, as well as Hutu democrats, leading to the disappearance of nearly one million people. This catastrophe projected the genocidal fact onto the African continent.

How can we explain two such contradictory events? Should France's involvement in Rwanda be considered as one of the causes of the genocide? Does the return of France to Rwanda under a United Nations mandate with Operation Turquoise in June-August 1994, which aimed to "stop the massacres," change the nature of France's involvement? What answers do French archival sources provide to these questions?

These questions, which do not ignore the involvement of France's partners or the culpability of the genocidaires who were extremists from the Hutu majority, raise the question of France's responsibility in the catastrophe.¹ Does France have a share of responsibility in the genocide of the Tutsi, and if so, to what extent?

Only a thorough, methodical, and impartial investigation can attempt to answer this fundamental question. The conclusion of the Report will attempt to do so.

1. THE CHALLENGE OF A SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH ABOUT FRANCE IN RWANDA AND THE GENOCIDE OF THE TUTSI FROM 1990 TO 1994

The answer to these important questions requires taking into consideration all aspects of this French history. France was practically no longer present militarily in Rwanda when the genocide began on 7 April, 1994, following the assassination of Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira the previous evening. From 8 to 14 April, France led an operation to evacuate nationals from Kigali. When France returned to Rwanda, as part of a humanitarian operation conducted in the southwest of the country from 22 June to 21 August, 1994, the genocide of the Tutsi had been politically recognized by France since 16 May, through the voice of Foreign Minister Alain Juppé.

International recognition of the genocide came later. On 8 June, 1994,² the UN Security Council emphasized, with regard to the “violence [and] carnage of which the civilians were victims” that “genocide constitutes a crime that falls under international law.” It was not until 4 October, 1994 that the genocide of the Tutsi was finally recognized in the Interim Report of the Commission of Experts formed on the basis of Resolution 935 of 1 July 1994.³ An International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) was then created on 8 November, 1994 by Resolution 955,⁴ with the task of judging those responsible for the genocide. The recognition of the genocide of the Tutsi became part of international criminal law. It was done through a series of reports, including those mentioned in Resolution 955, statements by political leaders, and individual and collective actions by researchers. One of the major aspects of this Report is therefore conditioned by the analysis of France’s involvement in this process of recognition and by the examination of the obstacles that it may have faced.

The question of the responsibility of the French authorities in the genocide of the Tutsi must be addressed through research. It was raised as soon as the event occurred in the context of an increasingly acute power struggle between France and the new Rwandan regime. The RPF, which fought the Hutu genocidaires and stopped the genocide, came to power after its forces entered the capital, Kigali, on 4 July, 1994, and did not hesitate to accuse France of complicity in the genocide.⁵ As a retaliatory measure, Rwanda was not invited to the Franco-African summit in Biarritz on 8 November, 1994.⁶ On this

occasion, François Mitterrand spoke his truth about the genocide of the Tutsi, implicitly accusing the RPF in writing, then retracting his accusation orally, that it too had committed genocide, and minimizing the massacres committed in Rwanda, freezing them in the vision of the structural atavism attributed to Africa of “inter-ethnic massacres” that were bloodying the continent. Referring in the written text of his speech to “local leaders [who] deliberately decide to conduct a venture at the point of bayonets or to settle accounts with machetes,” the French president declared that “no international insurance policy can prevent a people from destroying itself.” He thus appeared to clear France and the international community of any responsibility for the catastrophe.

This statement was denounced, particularly in Kigali, but also in France and in Europe. At the same time, the United Nations Security Council formalized the creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.⁷ The Tribunal had been in the making since the resolution of 1 July 1994, the submission of the reports of the Special Rapporteur for Rwanda of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and the work accomplished by the Commission of Experts created by virtue of Resolution 935 on violations of international humanitarian law in Rwanda.⁸ The ICTR statute includes the crime of genocide for the first time since the 1948 Convention came into existence.⁹

The position expressed by the President of the Republic at the Biarritz summit and that of the new Rwandan authorities faced with the consequences of the genocide, place France in a delicate position. The question of France’s responsibilities in Rwanda became a taboo subject in official circles and a theme of press campaigns for intellectuals and activists, particularly those who stigmatized “Françafrique.” A recurrent, bitter and violent debate, commensurate with the stakes and passions, grew in France but also in Africa, Europe and throughout the world. Accusations are multiplying on the one hand, while denial and retaliation, including legal action, are increasing on the other, to the point of profoundly hindering the search for historical truth. Vivid polemics are in fact traversing the research community, creating definitive divisions and provoking irreparable ruptures. The violence of political, ideological and memorial confrontations reached the scientific community. Research is being carried out, but the quest for the

truth comes up against obstacles that cannot be overcome in this context of extreme passion. Among the difficulties was the limited access to the French archives, which legislation¹⁰ made non-communicable by virtue of the time limits for communicability extended to fifty years for the majority of the documents concerned and the classified status - as a national defense secret¹¹ - of some of them.

This conflict, revealing immense traumas and awakening memories of tragic past events, is not limited to France. States or international organizations that were involved in the collapse of Rwanda or that refrained from acting in the face of the Tutsi genocide are led to painfully and partially examine what their actions were during the years 1990-1994 in Central Africa. In France, a parliamentary information mission chaired by the former Minister of Defense, Paul Quilès, studied in 1998 “the military operations carried out by France, other countries and the UN between 1990 and 1994.”¹² Despite the quality of the parliamentarians’ investigation, whose rapporteurs were Pierre Brana and Bernard Cazeneuve, and the importance of the declassified state archives made public on this occasion, the report did not succeed in calming the conflict over memory. The latter is even aggravated by shifting to the judicial sphere and the diplomatic crisis.

Diplomatic tensions worsened to the point of triggering a rupture in relations between France and Rwanda, after the leaders of the current Rwandan regime were called to account for their supposed responsibilities¹³ in the Falcon 50 attack that led to the death of President Habyarimana and his Burundian counterpart on the evening of 6 April 1994, the event that triggered the Tutsi genocide. The Rwandan state retaliated with the publication, on 5 August, 2008, of an incriminating report that sought to prove France’s involvement in the preparation and execution of the genocide.¹⁴ Thirty-three French civilian and military figures are thus implicated and find themselves under threat of possible international legal proceedings. Their freedom of movement across borders is compromised.

An attempt at reconciliation with the regime in Kigali took place in 2010, at the initiative of President Nicolas Sarkozy, who made a trip to Rwanda, met with President Paul Kagame and paid his respects at the Kigali memorial, calling on “the international community, including France,

to reflect on its errors that kept it from preventing and stopping this appalling crime.” But his approach, like that of the French ambassador Laurent Contini delivering a speech in Kigali on 9 April, 2011, “in memory of the staff of this embassy who perished during the genocide of the Tutsi in 1994,” is criticized or misunderstood. However, it is part of a context of international evolution as evidenced by the statements of recognition and even apology from Belgium, the United States and the United Nations for their responsibility in the international inaction on the genocide of the Tutsi. In France, Nicolas Sarkozy’s approach was not pursued in this form by his successor. François Hollande was more interested in encouraging the opening of French archives on Rwanda and the Tutsi genocide. Researchers agree, however, that the announcements have not been followed up and that the open questions have remained unanswered.¹⁵ The problem of archives was not resolved. The trials of France over its role in Rwanda have been revived, and statements about its complicity in the genocide of the Tutsi have been reinforced. This conflictual climate and these passionate debates make the work of research in history and social sciences difficult and hazardous, despite the quality of many academic works, the emergence of a young research community, and the contribution of journalists’ investigations and associations’ reports. The effort for documentation is also manifested by the creation of independent internet databases. Scholarly production carried out abroad is struggling to exist in France, due to a lack of translation efforts. Historians and researchers are confronted with national political realities and are aware of the difficulty of accessing public archives, which cannot be communicated due to the application of legislation that makes access to them conditional on an individual exemption that is sometimes difficult to obtain, and due to the fact that many of them are classified as national defense secrets.

2. THE CREATION OF THE RESEARCH COMMISSION (5 APRIL, 2019)

Faced with the triple blockage, memorial, political and archival, action was taken by the President of the Republic, Emmanuel Macron, elected in May 2017, in the form of a diplomatic rapprochement between

France and Rwanda on the one hand,¹⁶ an initiative in favor of scientific research on the other, and finally a desire to open up French public archives. A press release was published by the President of the Republic on 5 April 2019. It describes the means that will be implemented¹⁷ - including the creation of a Commission of historians and researchers on the subject. The work of this Commission stems from a letter of mission¹⁸ sent that same day, 5 April 2019, by Emmanuel Macron to Professor Vincent Duclert, who would chair it. An initial composition of the team was simultaneously made public.

The Research Commission¹⁹ brings together teacher-researchers assembled by its president on the basis of the skills required to deal with the subject of the research and to exploit the sources of the inquiry. Consequently, it relies on specializations in law and archives, in the history of the state and political powers, and in the history of genocides.²⁰ Respecting the principle of parity, attached to the balance of generations and to the diversity of statuses, it is defined primarily by its adherence to the research project described in the mission statement and to the methodological and ethical questions it raises.

This team of historians and researchers has been assigned a double objective. First, as the mission letter specifically states, it is to make research prevail in the approach to French policy in Rwanda and the Tutsi genocide and to produce a scientific report within two years. It also aims to contribute to a wider opening of the archives on the subject to all researchers and the public.

To support the first objective, the Commission's independence is fully recognized and it benefits from the means described in the Intermediate Report submitted on 5 April, 2020, at the end of its first year of work.²¹ Five jobs were granted by the Ministry of Education at the request of the President of the Commission, as well as university sabbaticals for two professors. The other members of the Commission, many of whom are retired, worked on a voluntary basis. On a material level, the Commission has an operating budget and offices in a shared building belonging to the Ministry of the Armed Forces. In addition, the widest possible access to all existing archives is assured to the members of the

Commission. This access is based on both personal clearance for national defense secrecy, allowing consultation of any classified document, and systematic individual exemptions for access to non-disclosable documents. At the end of its work, the Commission was able to request that the sources used in the report and the organic fonds be opened to all researchers.

Less than two years after receiving its mission letter, the Research Commission completed its work and submitted its scholarly report to the President of the Republic, who immediately made it public. At the same time, the collection of facsimiles of all the archival sources used by the Commission was made available to the public at the National Archives,²² which the Commission had endeavored to ensure from the outset.²³ A general exemption authorizes universal access to this collection of approximately 6,000 documents, part of which, originally classified, was declassified at the request of the Commission. The derogation has been extended to state fonds: the Commission has asked the President of the Republic for a first wave of access to the presidential fonds and the fonds of Prime Minister Édouard Balladur, both of which have been fully declassified and are open to all at the National Archives.

The opening of the archives is coupled with a new knowledge of the French archives relating to Rwanda and the Tutsi genocide, thanks to the creation of a list of sources available on the websites of the archive centers and on the Commission's website - the latter having taken the initiative of launching this research tool with the major contribution of the archives' staff. In addition, the Commission is making available the transcriptions of numerous rushes shot in Rwanda by the operators of the ECPA (Établissement Cinématographique et Photographique des Armées) between 1990 and 1994.

The scholarly work constituted by the Report, as well as the political act of opening the French archives on Rwanda and the Tutsi genocide, can help societies come to terms with such a past of suffering, silence and destruction, both in France and in Europe, as well as in Rwanda and in Africa, and throughout the world, because these events belong to universal history. This collective scholarly research, despite the limitations of which the Commission is aware, can encourage a new confidence

in research and the writing of history. Its public reception even offers the possibility of liberating speech which has been unable to express itself until now, because it was caught in a vice between contradictory injunctions. This would be an unhoped-for effect of the Commission's work, as a third objective of the mission. It is also a debt that is affirmed here, the one that humanity has contracted towards the victims of the Tutsi genocide.²⁴ Their history must exist as that of Rwanda before the genocide, with its hopes for peace and its sacrificed dreams.

3. A SCHOLARLY COMMISSION

Readers of this Report must be familiar with the context in which it was produced, marked, as was mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, by the traces of thirty years of memorial, diplomatic, political and intellectual conflicts on the subject of Rwanda and the Tutsi genocide, in France, in Rwanda and throughout the world. They must also have a precise knowledge of the task addressed to researchers and contained in the presidential mission letter. This letter calls for three scholarly operations to be carried out:

- *propose a historian's critical understanding of the sources being examined;*
- *analyze France's role and engagement in Rwanda during this period, taking into account the role of other actors who were also engaged during this period;*
- *contribute to a more in-depth knowledge of the causes and unfolding of the genocide of the Tutsi, in order to achieve a better understanding of this historical tragedy and ensure its inclusion into the collective memory, particularly by younger generations.*

○

Such recommendations addressed to researchers and historians define the field of research in history and social sciences. They have been clarified and questioned in such a way as to constitute the main points of the following Report.

A historical look at archival sources

The first line of research refers to the need to critically approach primary sources, in this case public archives,

mainly state, political, military and administrative archives. Critical assessment of the sources requires the researchers to distance themselves by considering the documentary whole that they constitute and by analyzing their archival organization. The inventory of the sources meets this requirement. In this respect, it is appropriate to take stock of the archival campaign carried out by the Commission and to describe the entire archival landscape in which the fonds and series consulted are located. The work of the historian also leads to a contextualization of the documents studied and to the identification of all available elements of information, including the paratext, as well as the discourses and representations that determine them, the unspoken or the absent. Finally, the following important points should be stressed.

The collections relating to Rwanda and the Tutsi genocide that are kept in French public archives are very diverse. They emanate from different institutions and include different types of documents (minutes of meetings, diplomatic telegrams, military messages, political correspondence, memos, files, reports, etc.) produced by the issuing department or kept by the receiving department. They also include very important documentation of a public nature, such as the texts of national or international agreements, numerous association reports, as well as cartographic or statistical material. The Commission consulted political and administrative, civil and military archives, including presidential and governmental collections. It has been careful to compare the documents found there, respecting the requirement of cross-referencing sources that is incumbent on researchers. The diversity of sources also refers to the plurality of actors and institutions in charge of French policy(ies) in Rwanda. It allows us to approach the multiple representations that govern choices and decisions, and to understand how individual actors and institutions are informed of the actions carried out and of the reality on the ground.

The institutional archives consulted by the Commission also reveal the relationship of the institutions, both to the rule of law - because the 1979 law on archives requires them to preserve and deposit their administrative production²⁵ - and to the proper administration of their activities - because the necessary archiving requires them to keep their records in order. Some

of the most important institutions for the subject have not deposited their archives or at least they cannot be found today. This absence of organic archives concerns several services or authorities. In specific cases, the cross-checking of archive series has revealed irregular administrative practices, or even institutional abuses.

The Commission conducted investigations to try to find these archives by systematically questioning the conservation centers or services, and then by directly contacting - when archivists had exhausted their professional channels - the producers of the archives. In this way, it identified a few sets of documents that had been kept personally and that were subsequently deposited in archives. However, it was not possible to carry out all the necessary investigations. In this respect, it appears that resolute action must be taken to put an end to archival practices that the law, the public good and the interests of research condemn.

The Commission's mission statement prescribes that it work in French archives. An exhaustive approach to the subject would have required consultation of the archives of Rwanda²⁶ and the Great Lakes countries, those of France's Western partners, those of international organizations - the United Nations,²⁷ the OAU in particular - , those of French and European political parties, those of human rights associations and associations for the remembrance of victims, such as Ibuka, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the League of Human Rights and the FIDH, Survie, and others. Given the difficulties outlined above, the Commission cannot claim to have consulted French archival collections in a completely exhaustive manner despite its efforts to do so. However, as a team of researchers and historians, it has undertaken a rigorous examination of the methodically identified archival fonds. It has endeavored to restore the meaning of this documentation and to make it the basis of its research work.

Analysis of France's role and involvement in Rwanda between 1990 and 1994

The second line of research proposed to the Commission by its mission statement concerns the analysis of France's role and involvement in Rwanda between 1990 and 1994, taking into account the role of other actors involved during this period. It leads to a definition of

what “France” is, namely political authorities with decision-making capacity, state institutions, both military and civilian, institutional actors with responsibility, and executors. Both leaders and agents are citizens of a republican democracy and human beings endowed with a moral conscience and free will. France is also defined by its legal and constitutional frameworks, by its historical traditions, by its policies, formerly of colonization and now displayed as cooperation. It is also appropriate to question the knowledge possessed by the authorities in charge of the Rwanda dossier, as well as what concerns the history of this country, the knowledge of its society, its politics, its economy, and its alliances, especially regional ones.

The five years under study cover a period of strong military, diplomatic, political, economic, and financial cooperation, which is particularly evident in the dispatch of military combat units to a country that periodically experiences incursions and attacks from Uganda by Tutsi exiles and Hutu opponents of President Habyarimana’s regime. They are grouped within the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)²⁸ whose leaders reject an ethnicist approach to their movement that confuses them with the Tutsi minority. Born in Rwanda and driven out by Hutu persecution, they also refuse to be called foreigners, speak out against the “Habyarimana dictatorship” and seek to put an end to the massacres of Tutsi that are increasing in intensity and severity inside Rwanda. The reason for this is the radicalization of certain Hutu political and social forces, particularly in the northern regions whose clans are strongly represented in the regime, regions that are subject to repeated attacks by the RPF.

Deploying combat units officially responsible for protecting French and foreign nationals, and training and partly controlling the Rwandan Armed Forces and the gendarmerie, France is participating in this capacity as an “indirect supporter” of the regime under military attack. The question is to know whether this support is moving to a direct phase, contrary to what the authorities claim. The military engagement is systematically presented as an instrument for the search for stability between the parties with a view to a peace and power-sharing agreement that France favors and accompanies. France finds itself progressively torn

between the objective of continuing to assist the power of President Habyarimana, who benefited from a direct relationship with the French presidency, the need to support the Hutu democratic opposition, which alone wanted to negotiate with the RPF, the observation that extremist parties, propaganda, and militias were gaining in power, and the effect of both diplomatic and military offensives by the RPF. In other words, France's role is becoming increasingly complex, and some observers and political leaders see no way out.²⁹

Two events profoundly alter the status of this commitment in mid-1993. In France, the victory of the parliamentary opposition in the legislative elections of March 1993 led to a second cohabitation with the appointment of a government led by Edouard Balladur. The new Prime Minister asked the President of the Republic to share competences and decisions on diplomatic and military matters. In Rwanda, the implementation of the Arusha Accords, signed on 4 August 1993, was very difficult and delayed, and led to the departure of French troops, with the exception of some thirty technical military assistants, while United Nations forces, grouped within UNAMIR, embodied international commitments to peace and reconciliation. This French withdrawal was supported in Paris by the new Prime Minister who wanted to distance himself from the previous policy.

France is therefore no longer present in Rwanda as it was in the past, with the level of involvement it had had when the country was plunged into the genocide of the Tutsi and the massacre of the Hutu democrats, triggered by the attack on President Habyarimana (and his Burundian counterpart) on 6 April 1994 in Kigali. This was the work of a "Hutu Power" present at the top of the Rwandan State, in the armed forces and the gendarmerie, in the extremist Rwandan parties and their militias. The Interim Government (IRG) led the execution of the genocide with part of the Rwandan Armed Forces, including the Presidential Guard, a majority of state officials, including prefects, the various armed militias and many "neighbors" of the exterminated victims. It was being fought militarily by the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which launched a general attack from its bases in the northern regions and the Parliament buildings it occupied in Kigali. Its troops

carried out reprisals against Hutu civilians, particularly the elites deemed responsible for the genocide.

International recognition of the Tutsi genocide came late to the United Nations, when the Security Council decided on 21 April 1994, with the support of France, to reduce the size of UNAMIR. Although on 11 May, the new UN High Commissioner for Human Rights described the massacres of Tutsi as a “genocide,”³⁰ it was not until 8 June that the Security Council, through Resolution 925, took “note with the utmost concern of reports that acts of genocide³¹ have been committed in Rwanda.”³² France, which until then had followed the policy of the United Nations, made a sudden change by proposing to send a military operation of a humanitarian nature. This was in line with Security Council Resolution 929 of 22 June, which imposed strict neutrality between the belligerents and aimed at “stopping the massacres.” Proposed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, supported by the Prime Minister, and decided upon by the President of the Republic, Operation Turquoise ended on 21 August, with the bulk of the African contingents mobilized by France coming under the authority of UNAMIR.

The analysis of France’s role and involvement in Rwanda is therefore part of a time frame that is not only that of the war between the RPF and the Rwandan armed forces, that of peace with the Arusha Accords and their implementation, that of intense political activity, that of relations between Rwanda and its neighbors, and that of international aid to a country that is increasingly drained and in debt. This time frame is also the time frame of the Tutsi genocide through its preparation and execution. The Commission therefore questioned the relationship between France’s involvement and this genocide, as strongly emphasized in the third objective of the mandate submitted to the Commission’s team of historians and researchers.

A contribution to the renewal of historical analyses on the causes of the Tutsi genocide

The third line of research taken by the Commission follows from the first two. Can France’s policy in Rwanda between 1990 and 1994 be analyzed as a cause, direct

or indirect, of the genocidal process? Does France, through its support for the Habyarimana regime and its army, bear responsibility for the extermination of the Tutsi and the widespread massacres? Were the competent institutions, the authorities in charge of such a policy, aware of the possibility of a genocide which, from what we know from the lessons of history, is predictable since it is programmed, planned, and directed towards a designated group, victims targeted for their supposed belonging, and massacred with a characterized will of violence and cruelty on people? What were the obstacles that prevented France from seeing and understanding? Why was a policy of prevention and repression not implemented in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Crimes of Genocide of 9 December 1948, to which France has been a signatory since 14 October, 1950, and which the State, its agents, and its authorities cannot theoretically ignore?³³

In addition to this legal reality, there has been the dissemination of knowledge about genocide with the publication, in quick succession in 1988 and 1989, of the translation of Raul Hilberg's monumental research on *The Destruction of the Jews of Europe*,³⁴ and the publication of the proceedings of an inaugural colloquium under the direction of Raymond Aron and François Furet, *Nazi Germany and the Jewish Genocide*.³⁵

These serious but necessary questions, which are the responsibility of researchers working on the basis of knowledge objectives such as those described in the mission letter, are not the result of *a posteriori* reconstructions or anachronisms. The genocide of the Tutsi was noted and publicly recognized in France on 16 May, 1994.³⁶ As for the possible preparation of the genocide, warnings appeared at the end of 1990. They emerge from the archives studied. What credence was given to these warnings and what meaning did they have? Did decisions follow?

Examining the relationship between France's involvement in Rwanda and the genocidal process that developed there against the Tutsi minority, against a backdrop of serious political violence, leads to a triple question. What did France know about the preparation of the genocide? Were its policies adapted to the perceived risks? What support did it receive from its partners and international organizations to understand this pre-genocidal reality?

A final question arises, one that is familiar to historians specializing in genocide, including those present on the Research Commission, that of the link between an advance in democracy and its annihilation by genocide. This problem has been known since the extermination of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. It was repeated in Weimar Germany with the spiral of anti-Semitism and the rise of the Nazi party. It was present in Rwanda between 1990 and 1993. How did France view the peace and power-sharing agreements that were not easily concluded and signed on 4 August, 1993, in Arusha? What role did it wish to play alongside the opposition parties to the presidential power, which also distinguished themselves from the Rwandan Patriotic Front and its diplomatic and military policies?

The consultation of archives and historical analysis facilitate progress in resolving these questions. For example, they allow identifying the alerts issued by agents posted in Rwanda and in the Great Lakes region, as well as the analyses produced by government services in France. Both describe serious threats to the Rwandan population, to the stability of the region, and to the continuation of the peace and democratization process. It is also necessary to shed light on the responsibility of other countries and international organizations that intervene or do not intervene in the resolution of the Rwandan crisis.

The two French military operations in Rwanda in 1994 must be given special consideration. From 8 to 14 April, 1994, Operation Amaryllis evacuated French and foreign nationals, as well as Rwandans deemed to be under threat. What did France understand about the events that were taking place in Kigali? France returned, with Operation Turquoise, from 22 June to 21 August, 1994, to the southwest of a country given over to the extermination of the Tutsi and to war. How can we analyze this intervention in its multiple dimensions, military, humanitarian and diplomatic? What knowledge did France acquire of the Tutsi genocide and of those who carried it out and those responsible for it? Does the documentation that has been preserved bear witness to this?

The French archives contain documentary sources that provide information on the massacres in Rwanda, on the state of violence and civil war, on the ethnic targeting of the Tutsi, a minority that was consciously

rejected by the Rwandan national community and denounced by means of concerted propaganda. The Tutsi of Rwanda were exterminated beginning 7 April, 1994. If the archives of Operation Amaryllis are silent on this point - with the exception of rare shots taken by ECPA operators - those of Operation Turquoise contain important information on the suffering of the victims and the extreme violence, as well as on the identity of the executioners.

The archives consulted also provide information on the radicalization of Rwandan legal power, the misuse of certain national institutions, the nature of certain discriminatory speeches, the production of exterminating literature, and the tipping of political parties into the sphere of extremist militias. They point to the organized nature of the massacres that preceded or followed the offensives of the RPF, which was designated as the “enemy” and with which the ideology of the Habyarimana regime associated the Tutsi of the interior and even members of the opposition parties. The challenge is to know and verify whether the sources consulted effectively document the origins of the genocide, such as the constitution of a genocidal power, the persecution of designated victims in order to dehumanize them, the impotence and despair of those in charge who were aware of the risks of a future catastrophe, as well as the key factor of international abstention.

This research work brings, to the extent possible, documented and argued answers to this set of questions.

4. ORGANIZATION OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

This report includes methodological appendices that will be published on the Commission’s website, and a development in three parts.

Methodological appendices

The methodological appendices, which are usual practice for researchers reporting on their work and which are published on the websites of the Commission, the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs and the DILA, reflect the Commission’s concern for transparency and are intended to establish a relationship of trust with the reader. They include an analysis of the situation and the structure of the archival collections to be identified, examined and used, as well as a presentation of the methods

applied to this so-called first-hand documentation, “in the thick of history” in other words. The critical approach to the archival sources consulted is detailed. It insists on the conditions of their use for historical research, on the documentary contribution that they offer on several levels and on the limits of this documentation.

The development of the archival terrain is crucial for this type of research based on archival sources. At least three paths must be followed simultaneously: consulting the inventories of the fonds made available to the Commission by the archive centers (and the research of their own archivists); meeting with former actors in order to identify deposits that may have escaped the collection and conservation of archives; and finally, the task of translating the research object into institutional terms in order to question the archival terrain of the research as thoroughly as possible.

This last point is necessary in order to carry out rigorous work in the archives, since this documentation is structured in fonds (referring to the activity of a physical or moral person) and not in collections (corresponding to an intellectual theme). The institutional examination of the subject, accompanied by a series of basic data illuminating the object of research, is therefore conducted in the first part of the methodological annexes. The methodology of the archives is discussed in the second part.

Historians approach archival sources according to methods that involve - and this is the object of the third and final part of the methodological appendices - making a precise history of them, or at least being aware of their historicity. The French archival collections on Rwanda and the Tutsi genocide held in public archives exist as a result of a series of operations. The first is the written record of an institution's activities, implying that there was a will to do so and an awareness of the importance of leaving a record of a decision, an action, or a protest. This is followed by the conservation in these so-called producing services, the collection by the archive centers, their conservation and their scholarly valorization through inventories or statements of deposit. The history, structure and specificities of the fonds relevant to the research, identified

jointly by archivists and historians, are set out in these online methodological annexes.

A chronological and thematic approach in seven chapters

The report is structured in three main parts, which shed light on each other. Parts I and II are each made up of three chapters that set out, in chronological progression, the framework of events. The first part, entitled “Engaging in Rwanda,” is devoted to France’s role in Rwanda during the years 1990-1993. The second part, entitled “France and the Genocide,” examines the events of 1994. Part III, entitled “Governing the State in the Rwandan Crisis,” offers, in one long chapter, a cross-cutting analysis of decision-making processes and the functioning of institutions.

The three chapters that make up Part I examine the design and implementation of French policy in Rwanda between 1990 and 1993. The first, “Intervening in Rwanda,” deals with the events of October 1990. It examines the triggering of the French intervention and the reasons that led France to make Rwanda a kind of test for the spirit of the La Baule speech by offering President Habyarimana a guarantee of military protection in exchange for a program of democratization, respect for human rights, and negotiations with the RPF. It should be noted that from the end of 1990, voices were raised in France and in Rwanda to warn of the risks of such a choice. Chapter 2, “France’s Response to Successive Rwandan Crises,” covers the years 1991 and 1992. Describing in detail the French military presence in Rwanda, it raises the question of the involvement, direct or otherwise, of French forces. This chapter also examines the modalities of decision-making in France with regard to Rwanda. Chapter 3, “Towards Disengagement,” covers the year 1993. It analyzes the shift in French policy in Rwanda, which led to the departure of most French troops at the end of the year. French observers were then aware of the deterioration of the political situation, but not necessarily of a pre-genocidal risk.

Part II opens with Chapter 4, “France, the War, and the Genocide (April-June 1994),” which deals successively with the period of pre-genocidal radicalization, the paroxysmal phase of the genocide,

and its aftermath. After analyzing the phenomenon of radicalization that led to the genocide, it examines the attack of 6 April and its consequences, including Operation Amaryllis. The study then focuses on the reactions of French and international authorities who were slow to qualify the genocide. Finally, this chapter explores the genesis of Operation Turquoise, between criticism of previous French policy and social demand for French intervention in Rwanda. Chapter 5, “Operation Turquoise,” examines the political, diplomatic, and military aspects of the military and humanitarian operation that France decided on 15 June and launched on 22 June, after obtaining a UN mandate. The analysis attempts to deal with all the dimensions of the intervention, including those that are the subject of recurrent controversy, but also to understand its deepest motives and to establish an assessment. Finally, Chapter 6 examines “After Turquoise,” once again raising the question of France’s response to the genocide. We see how difficult France’s relations with the RPF remained, particularly when the Turquoise units were relieved by UN Blue Helmets, and then during the negotiations for the creation of the ICTR. The Biarritz summit crystallized these tensions, with France choosing not to invite Rwanda and maintaining ambiguity about a possible “double genocide.”

The third part, composed of Chapter 7, returns to the study of the decision-making processes over the entire period and to the unthinkable genocide. It seeks to understand the reasons why the French authorities, although sufficiently informed through multiple channels of the threats of destruction of the Tutsi of Rwanda, did not reorient their policy to better take into account these risks, their significance and their consequences. France, however, is no exception. Neither Rwanda’s other partners nor international organizations act differently. However, France is the country most involved in Rwanda and, as such, it has particular responsibilities. The power of its State, the republican democracy that it embodies, the rank to which it aspires in the world, its status as a permanent member of the Security Council, impose other responsibilities on it. The fact that it did not envisage such a possibility, that it limited itself to fearing “inter-ethnic massacres,” that it did not conceive the risk of radicalization of extremist circles, raises questions about the decision-making process, the action of institutions and

those who serve them, the control and analysis of information. While the perception of the genocidal threat is, in the end, hardly present in the determinations that contribute to the realization of French policy, what are the main reasons for this? The hypothesis of the existence of several parallel policies, in competition or even in opposition and in conflict, can also be formulated. This question refers to the commitments of institutions, to the decisions that emanate from them, and to the responsibilities taken by those who serve or direct them.

The conclusions of the Report summarize the results of archival research on the role and involvement of France in Rwanda between 1990 and 1994. They then address the question of political, intellectual, cognitive, ethical and moral responsibilities. Finally, they propose recommendations.

5. DATA AND LIMITS OF A RESEARCH PROJECT

The members of the Research Commission measured the weight of the memorial, political and scholarly context of the last thirty years on the subject of Rwanda and the genocide of the Tutsi. Without in any way minimizing or ignoring it, they saw, through the access they were granted to the French archives on the subject, the possibility of distancing themselves from the post-1994 events in order to rediscover the reality of those that took place between 1990 and 1994. Their report must be read in the light of this ambition.

First and foremost, this research work must be assessed in light of the scholarly mandate proposed in the mission letter and analyzed above. The Report is therefore required to respond to it and the conclusion will endeavor to do so. The results of the research must also be measured in the context in which it was carried out. The Commission's work developed under conditions that should be noted:

- The challenge of creating a research commission without a predefined model, and in a climate of hostility and mistrust.
- The constraints linked to the organization of the work in archives, including a large part of classified documents with heavy regulatory requirements,³⁷ and to the mobilization of the archive centers for which the Commission, in its formation, was a first: their personnel,

both scientific and administrative and technical, achieved a professional and human feat that the Commission wishes to commend.

- The difficulty of completing the work in 18 months, resulting from the delays linked to the launch of the archival campaign and the three months' break in the processing of data due to the closure of the archive centers and services at the time of the first confinement.³⁸
 - The magnitude of the work required to process the unusual mass of archival sources, to carry out the investigations made necessary by the gaps that the Commission found in the fonds or by the absence of entire fonds. In addition, a cumbersome but necessary procedure was put in place to establish piecemeal requests for declassification and authorization to distribute all the documents gathered in facsimile in the Report's source boxes.³⁹ The rare but significant refusals to disclose or consult documents, which were made in response to the Commission's requests, undermined the exhaustive nature of the Commission's work. The Bureau of the National Assembly refused to allow the Commission to consult the archives of the 1998 Parliamentary Information Mission (MIP).⁴⁰ The Commission would also have liked to have been able to consult the archives of the Prime Minister's military cabinet without the imposed restrictions. The slowness of the investigation into certain requests from the Commission also prevented it from accessing sensitive files, for example, the appointments and promotions in the order of the Legion of Honor of dignitaries from the Habyarimana regime.
 - The very nature of a task based, as prescribed in the mission letter of 5 April, 2019, on the exploitation and analysis of French archival collections. This led the Commission to rely almost exclusively on written sources. Facts and data that have not been recorded in writing thus escape analysis. For example, the difficulty of reconstructing what are called "presidential directives," communicated during face-to-face meetings, "verbal orders" in the military, "informal meetings" in the diplomatic service, and telephone communications that leave no trace, has made it more difficult to analyze the decision-making process and to reconstruct the chains of command. As a result, the Commission paid particular attention to the furtive traces that appear
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in some documents (handwritten comments, various annotations, use of bold or underlined text), as well as to the inconsistencies of certain sets of documents. The use or constitution of oral archives, through systematic interviews with former actors or witnesses, might have compensated for the shortcomings of the written sources. The Commission was unable to conduct such an undertaking.

The mention of these limitations is not intended to excuse any shortcomings in the Report. The Commission accepts the Report in its entirety, with its imperfections, shortcomings and, probably, its errors, despite the care taken to avoid them. It considers its work to be a step towards further research, particularly on the Tutsi genocide, which still lacks a scholarly investment comparable to that made on the Armenian genocide and the Shoah. With the written production that constitutes the Report and the very important mass of archives made public - many of them now declassified - the Research Commission is laying the groundwork for future work. It prolongs this with recommendations in favor of a scholarly and documentary mobilization on the Tutsi genocide, which it includes in its conclusion.

Finally, none of this would have been possible without the relationship of trust that the Commission was able to establish with the public archivists, who were particularly invested professionally and humanly in the progress of its work. This relationship of trust was not limited to the archivists but was prevalent everywhere. The Commission constituted a community of researchers for whom historical knowledge is the opposite of a knowledge that is closed or that would rely only on partial and biased incursions into the sources. The historical method has prevailed above all else. It has led to clear results, important statements that the rest of the Report reveals and demonstrates. The Commission has recognized the reality of a genocide and its immeasurable impact on a nation, on a continent. The history of Rwanda and Africa is the culmination of this search for history.

PART ONE

ENGAGING IN RWANDA

Chapter 1

Intervening in Rwanda (1990)

On 1 October the Kagitumba post on the Rwandan-Ugandan border (northeastern Rwanda) was attacked by about 100 men in arms and uniforms. On 2 October the situation suddenly deteriorated due to a rebel or foreign penetration reaching 30 km south of Kagitumba and the inability of the Rwandan army to organize its defense.¹

These alarmist statements are the beginning of a memo addressed on 2 October 1990 to President François Mitterrand by his chief of staff, Admiral Lanxade. Faced with the offensive in northern Rwanda, the French presidency sent paratroopers from the Foreign Legion and a marine infantry unit to Kigali. The soldiers of the operation, called *Noroît*, had the mission of ensuring the safety of French nationals. While acting as a deterrent, they also protected the regime in place. In a few days, the fundamental elements of the French presence in Rwanda were put in place. The matter was followed directly by the President of the Republic and by his personal military staff (*état-major particulier*, or EMP).

What led France to become involved in Rwanda? This small country in the Great Lakes region is not a former French colony. It has only recently become part of the so-called “field” countries that are France’s privileged partners in Africa. The cooperation agreements linking it to France are limited. Belgium, a former colonial power, and not France, is Rwanda’s main economic partner.

The answer is probably to be found in the Franco-African summit held from June 19 to 21 of the same year in La Baule. In a speech that served as a reference for the years to come, President François Mitterrand proposed a new partnership model to the invited heads of State, including the President of Rwanda, Juvénal Habyarimana. France will support in all areas, including military, those countries that evolve towards

democratic forms of government. This was the background to the deal offered to the President of Rwanda in 1990: the strong intervention and maintenance of the French army on Rwandan soil in exchange for a profound evolution of the country's governance.² President Habyarimana was given a new model of partnership. President Habyarimana had met with the French president in Paris the previous April and asked him for military support in the face of the incidents taking place on his northern border.³ He was among the African heads of State who commented positively on François Mitterrand's speech.⁴

Exchanging military support for a policy of democratization and respect for human rights: from the last weeks of October 1990, voices were raised in France and Rwanda to judge this strategy risky, even impossible, because of the serious human rights violations of the Kigali regime and the targeted violence against the Tutsi. The choice, however, was made at the highest level of the State to implement it.

The following chapter describes how decisions to intervene in Rwanda and to stay there were made and implemented between October 1990 and January 1991. It is based on archival holdings of varying magnitude. The collection of the presidency of President Mitterrand, deposited in the National Archives, is the most significant. It contains memos submitted to President Mitterrand by his advisors for Africa and the members of his personal military staff. They allow us to identify the moment of decision making and the representations that underlie them. The Élysée archives also suggest that there was no consensus on policy in Rwanda. Some advisors relayed the hesitations, warnings, and concerns that arose in various circles. There is also evidence in these archives of interventions from Rwanda, including visits or telephone calls from the Rwandan president to his French counterpart. There is no way of knowing whether the documents at our disposal reflect the entire decision-making process. There is no doubt, however, that the choices are made at the Élysée by the president himself and that the EMP, in liaison with the advisor for African and Malagasy affairs, is the linchpin of the policy conducted in Rwanda.

However, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Defense, as well as the Armed Forces Staff, which are responsible

for implementing this policy, develop their own analyses. In the absence of accessible archives, it is difficult to understand the reluctance of the Minister of Defense, Jean-Pierre Chevènement. On the other hand, we can find traces of the actions and questions of the military personnel stationed in Rwanda who reported to the military staff in Paris. The papers of the Ministry of Cooperation illustrate rather the commitment of France, its diplomatic action in the Great Lakes region and the details of the military aid it provided to Rwanda. The telegrams and diplomatic messages sent by the ambassador and the defense attaché in Kigali, read at the Élysée Palace as well as at the Ministry of Defense or by the military staff, inform Paris about President Habyarimana's requests and provide an understanding of the motivations and representations behind the acts. The files of the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs make it possible to place Rwanda in the broader framework of France's African policy. They also make it possible to understand the position of the heads of State of Zaire, Uganda and Burundi on the Rwandan question, or at least what they were willing to tell their interlocutors. Finally, these archives keep track of the RPF's contacts with the French authorities, warning them as early as October 1990 that President Habyarimana's regime was engaging in targeted abuses against the Tutsi and that this regime was not a reliable partner for a policy of democratization of the country.

These warnings raise a question: what does the term "democratization" mean in the political culture of the various actors in the drama in 1990? Things are happening as if there were a traditional conception: a country is democratic if it has parliamentary institutions, political parties, and an opposition that can enter the government. This is what France has been insisting on from its Rwandan partner since 1990. However, the concept of democracy that was imposed in the last quarter of the 20th century emphasized the respect of human rights. The flagrant violations of the latter by the Kigali authorities explain the reluctance of the opinion of certain European countries such as Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, and even the United States, alerted by the associations of Rwandans in exile, as well as the discontent repeatedly shown by Paris. The slowness of the implementation of the

democratization process and the extent of human rights violations in Rwanda worried France as early as 1990.

By the end of 1990, many of the elements that would make France's policy in Rwanda fragile were perceptible. This was not enough to change its course.

1.1. OCTOBER 1990: DECIDING ON AND JUSTIFYING A MILITARY INTERVENTION

The decision to carry out an emergency intervention in Rwanda was taken by the President of the Republic, in his capacity as head of the armed forces. François Mitterrand was traveling in the Middle East at the time, accompanied by the Minister of Defense, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Roland Dumas, his Chief of Staff, Admiral Lanxade, and government spokesman Hubert Védrine. No written record seems to document this decision, which is known from the memoirs of Jean-Pierre Chevènement and his statement before the parliamentary information mission (MIP), chaired by Paul Quilès, on 16 June 1998. Anxious to make it clear that he himself had no part in the decision, Jean-Pierre Chevènement explained in 1998 to the parliamentarians who heard him that he had only one memory of the intervention in Rwanda, that of its launch. The decision to send French troops to Kigali took place:

[...] one morning, in the Gulf, aboard the frigate Dupleix, with the President of the Republic and Admiral Lanxade, his chief of staff at the Elysée Palace, quite early on, in the company of the captain. At that moment, an encrypted message was brought to the President of the Republic which, once decoded, made it clear that President Habyarimana was requesting French military intervention to help him face the RPF attack. The President then turned to Admiral Lanxade and asked him to respond favorably to this request. The Admiral stepped aside and sent directives to the operational command of the armies that led to the dispatch of a company, whose mission was first and foremost to ensure the protection of our nationals.⁵

General Marc-Amédée de Monchal, head of the military cabinet of the Minister of Defense, also interviewed in 1998, remembers receiving a call and being surprised because, although the situation in Rwanda was being

followed by the competent services, the country was not a priority. The secretary in charge of recording and summarizing the hearings writes:

Speaking about the launching of Operation Noroît in October 1990, General Marc-Amédée de Monchal thought he remembered that he had received a telephone call from Admiral Jacques Lanxade informing him that the President of the Republic was asking to consider an intervention in Rwanda [...] The military cabinet then passed on the information to the Armed Forces Staff, which may have already been informed at the same time, and informed the Director of the Cabinet, and thus the Minister, who took the matter into account.⁶

At the time, the implementation of an intervention in Africa followed a pattern recalled by General Marc-Amédée de Monchal during the same hearing by the Parliamentary Information Mission: first, the Elysée Palace “launched” the intervention, possibly on the proposal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and then set up a “crisis unit” responsible for examining the proposed decisions and monitoring their execution. This crisis unit normally includes representatives of the Presidency and the Prime Minister, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Cooperation, and other ministries as needed. In 1990, it met “according to the situation to coordinate the actions of the various ministries and to draw up proposals to be decided by the President of the Republic.”⁷

In the case of Rwanda, the diplomatic channel involving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was bypassed somewhat, since Georges Martres, the French ambassador in Kigali, indicated in his deposition to the MIP in 1998⁸ that on 3 October 1990, the Rwandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially requested France’s support from Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, the African advisor to the President, and Jacques Pelletier, the Minister for Cooperation. The crisis unit met on 4 October at the Élysée Palace, the same day that the French paratroopers landed in Kigali. In fact, from the outset, the question of Rwanda was dealt with by the President of the Republic. Two questions were urgently raised at the beginning of October: to receive reliable information from Kigali and to develop a justification for the French intervention that would be acceptable to France’s partners.

Two main sources allow us to understand how the justification for the French intervention in Rwanda was elaborated: the memos addressed to President Mitterrand by his advisors and the messages coming from Kigali in the

form of diplomatic telegrams that informed Paris about the reality of the military situation in Rwanda, the unrest in the city of Kigali and the position of the Rwandan authorities. Basing the analysis on the presidential archives and messages from Kigali, supplemented by documents from the Ministry of Defense or the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, necessarily provides a partial view of the decision-making process. These documents do, however, make it possible to identify the problems of the day. The difficulty for the presidency, during the first two weeks of October 1990, was to correctly assess the situation in Rwanda and to find the arguments that justified first the intervention, and then the maintenance of France's military presence. The information that arrived in Paris through the French embassy in Kigali was contradictory, poorly supported or influenced by the Rwandan authorities.

1.1.1 Uncertain information from the post in Kigali

The analyses of the Kigali post must be put into context. It is a small diplomatic post and does not have serious intelligence resources. When events occurred on the northern border of the country on 1 October, Ambassador Georges Martres was on vacation.⁹ The defense attaché was in charge of the mission. It was the defense attaché and the second secretary who informed Paris. It was not until 5 October 1990 that the signature of Ambassador Georges Martres appeared. How do their messages contribute to the interpretation of the situation?

A diplomatic telegram usually obeys precise rules for its drafting: one part faithfully transcribes the facts or the positions of those concerned. A second part allows the writer to correct, qualify or comment, if necessary, on this information. In an emergency, these two steps are not always respected: the Kigali post relies on the experience of the recipients to interpret the information. Moreover, dates are important: some days several messages leave the Kigali post and their information may contradict each other as the situation evolves or as knowledge becomes clearer. At each stage of the information circuit, the choice of words and the mode of verbs - in particular the use of the conditional tense - are important because they can weigh on the decision.

1.1.1.1 AN AGGRESSION THAT IS DIFFICULT TO ASSESS

On 1 October 1990, the defense attaché and head of the military assistance mission (MAM) in Kigali, Colonel Galinié, reported, in a message that reached the presidency of the Republic in Paris, on the penetration of soldiers at the northern border of Rwanda.¹⁰ This diplomatic telegram was addressed, in addition to his hierarchy, to the General Secretariat of National Defense (SGDN), the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs (DAM) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Cooperation and the Embassy in Kinshasa. Based on what his Rwandan informants told him, he describes a rather modest attack of a scale that is difficult to assess: about a hundred men, identified without certainty as Tutsi, would have entered Rwanda from Uganda. They travelled by car, perhaps with armored vehicles, and were armed with Kalashnikovs and probably mortars or cannons:

[...] the strength of the adversaries is estimated by the Rwandans to be at least a hundred men in combat gear equipped with individual weapons, including Kalashnikovs, possibly mortars and SR guns. [...] The latter, who came from Uganda, are said to have taken up position in Rwanda on the hills overlooking the post they occupy. They are said to have unmarked vehicles with which they crossed the border and 5 light armored vehicles that arrived as reinforcements in the early afternoon. [...] their nationality is not currently known - however Tutsi refugees are strongly suspected.¹¹

The Rwandan armed forces (FAR), which have an armored squadron, Land Rover vehicles equipped with machine guns, an armed French Gazelle helicopter and an Islander aircraft, appear to have taken up their positions. They have not begun to fight because they have not received orders from President Habyarimana, who is on a trip to the United States. They block “the only national road.” Only a few civilians are injured.

Elements of the Gabiro Company moved towards the post; [...] aerial reconnaissance is underway: 2 armed Gazelles (one gun – one rocket) and an Islander.¹² [...] a squadron of the armored battalion consisting of 5 AML/60s and 8 Land Rover jeeps equipped with 7.62 machine guns was dispatched to the site in the early afternoon. Mission: to take up a position to stop the ENI [enemy] south of the only national road. [...] all these elements are waiting for the authorization to use their weapons, which seems to be delayed due to the absence of the president, who is currently in the

USA. [...] no indication was given of any military casualties, although some civilians living near the post were reportedly killed. The whole of the FAR is on alert.¹³

The next day, 2 October, the defense attaché sent a new message to inform his superiors of the evolution of the situation. This time, the information came from French nationals who were present in several units of the Rwandan army as part of a training program. They described an army that was disorganized and unable to fight back. Rwanda was about to make an official request for military aid to France and Belgium.

Subject: Situation on 2 October 1990 at 11:00 a.m. Observations from the post: According to the information provided by our assistants in the units, those that are set up are dispersed and reach their area of action in disorder. The officers do not show great enthusiasm. The general staff seemed to act on an ad hoc basis, without any idea of a determined maneuver. At a meeting at the Ministry of Defense at 10 a.m., Colonel Rusatira,¹⁴ Secretary General, appeared very concerned. He announced that it was possible that the President of the Republic would ask for military assistance from France and Belgium in the form of an armed intervention.¹⁵

The same recipients as before in Paris were informed, as well as the French embassies in the countries of the region, Kampala (Uganda), Nairobi (Kenya), Bujumbura (Burundi) and Kinshasa (Zaire).

It was only on 3 October 1990 that the defense attaché had more detailed, but not necessarily more reliable, information on the identity of the attackers and the nature of the offensive. He transmitted them to Paris in a long message whose terms underlined the importance of the attack. The “attacking forces,” now estimated at 1,500 men, were clearly re-evaluated upwards. They continue to “advance on the ground” and the capital, Kigali, is in imminent danger of being taken. The situation of the Rwandan armed forces is presented as desperate: they have no reserves, lack ammunition and fuel, and do not seem to be able to pull themselves together.

Other information coming from the Rwandan Ministry of Defense builds the idea of a multi-faceted attack led by Tutsi coming from both the north (Uganda) and the south (Burundi). The capital could be threatened:

*According to the Rwandan Ministry of Defense, the ENI [enemy] “would have a total of 8,000 to 10,000 men in Uganda. The latter are said to be of Tutsi ethnicity, either Rwandan refugees or supporters of the latter” [...] they could launch a major offensive on the Kabale-Byumba-Kigali axis with a view to taking the capital. This priority action could be supported by secondary actions led by Tutsi refugees in Burundi [...].*¹⁶

The defense attaché, Colonel Galinié, transmitted another important piece of information in the same message. The Rwandan government had unleashed a violent campaign of repression in Kigali specifically targeting Tutsi and members of the political opposition. It details the measures: introduction of a curfew in the cities from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m., placing the agglomerations in a state of defense, arresting suspects and calling for denunciations.¹⁷

For the time being, the head of State, who had already appealed to Belgium the day before, wanted to ask France for “immediate help with ammunition and equipment” as well as for military intervention.¹⁸ In his conclusions, the defense attaché shows that he is aware that the seriousness of the situation is exaggerated by his interlocutors (“as for the 8,000 to 10,000 men, it may be inflated to give the idea that Rwanda is seriously attacked”¹⁹). On the other hand, he relayed their point of view on the ethnic component of the “enemy” army and took up, without commenting on it, the thesis that gave credence to the idea of a plot financed by the powerful Tutsi financial community, a thesis that justified at the same time the ferocious repression that was being carried out against the Tutsi in Kigali. Of this invasion, he wrote: “We can now consider that it was prepared for a long time in advance by Tutsi from the interior and exterior. The latter have significant funds, given their position in the Rwandan and Ugandan economies.”²⁰

1.1.1.2 ANTI-TUTSI PERSECUTION AND PROVOCATION IN KIGALI

Two important events occurred. On the one hand, the “offensive” was repelled. The Rwandan Armed Forces brought into play the mortars at their disposal. Three Rwandan Forces armed helicopters destroyed a convoy of fuel and supply trucks on the evening of 3 October. Most importantly - but not yet known - Colonel Fred Rwigyema, a founding member of the RPF who was leading

the operation, was killed. Colonel Kagame returned urgently from the United States to take over the leadership of the operation.

In addition, a hunt for Tutsi and members of the opposition parties began in Kigali, where they were killed in their homes or arrested and held in Kigali's stadium in appalling conditions before being executed. On the night of 4-5 October, the situation was further confused by gunfire in Kigali, which the Rwandan government attributed to infiltration by enemy fighters, while the media quickly detected an operation mounted by the government. The annual report of the French ambassador, written in January of the following year, testifies to the uncertainty that reigned at the Kigali post about the event. He confirmed that the shots fired at the embassy came from the Rwandan army, that the number of killed and wounded was very low and that no strategic objective was targeted.

During the night of Thursday, 4 October, to Friday, 5 October, violent gunfire was unleashed between 2:30 a.m. and 5:30 a.m. on the airport, the military camps, the Ministry of Defense and the presidential residence. French paratroopers stationed at the airport and the chancellery were forced to return fire, but as far as the chancellery was concerned, it quickly became apparent that the shots were coming from the Rwandan army, as the Embassy was located on the trajectory.

Even though the shooting was harrowing, especially for the European population, which was very demoralized on the morning of 5 October, it was immediately noticeable that the number of people killed and wounded was not very high (3 Africans were however shot in an Electrogaz car 100 meters from our Embassy). No specific targets were hit and the damage was relatively limited, given the use of some heavy weapons.²¹

However, the ambassador does not seem to share the hypothesis put forward by the journalists, confirmed by the 1998 parliamentary information mission report, of a provocation orchestrated by President Habyarimana:

The hypothesis of a "set-up" by the Rwandan government was even considered by some journalists who accused the government of having found a pretext to launch a severe crackdown. This hypothesis is to be excluded because it is unlikely that the national authorities would have taken the risk of organizing such a fireworks display.²²

In the emergency, he immediately took the decision to evacuate French nationals who wished to do so.²³ This was easy, since

the first French paratroopers of the Foreign Legion landed in Kigali in the late afternoon of 4 October.

1.1.1.3 THE GUERRILLA HYPOTHESIS

The Rwandan authorities sought to increase the threat to their country in order to induce France and Belgium to grant them military support. Since the reality of a massive attack is no longer proven, they explain that they are now facing a less visible but equally dangerous guerrilla war. On 4 October, the French defense attaché in Kigali met with his Rwandan interlocutors, who make two affirmations. First, the deliveries of military equipment (helicopters, mortars) were justified because they had made it possible to stop the offensive, in particular by destroying a column of enemy trucks. Secondly, “the invaders from Uganda” are said to be in the process of switching to guerrilla warfare, a form of conflict characterized by the presence of fighters dressed in civilian clothes:

The invaders from Uganda no longer seem to operate in organic units, but in groups, alternating between civilian and military clothing, depending on their position and the local situation. This process enabled them to reach Lake Mubazi and the area around the town of Rwamagana. The switch to guerrilla warfare, which had been in effect since the evening of 3 October, seemed likely to last, given the destruction by the Rwandan ALAT on the evening of 3 October of a column of ten trucks, including two carrying fuel, north of Gabiro, coming from Uganda, and the destruction on the morning of 4 October of the invaders' main headquarters in the Kagitumba region.²⁴

On 6 October, Ambassador Martres was convinced that he was facing “partisans” who could rely on hiding places in the country, which implied complicity and local sympathies within clandestine networks supported by Uganda:

It is confirmed, he writes, that [the attackers] include Ugandan deserters of Tutsi origin, Tutsi who have taken refuge in Uganda, more or less voluntary supporters recruited since the invasion of the northeast, and resolute supporters who have contributed greatly to the establishment of arms caches and networks of sympathizers in Kigali. Their total strength in Rwanda may currently be between 1,500 and 2,000.²⁵

In the context of this supposed guerrilla warfare, the ambassador imagines a future in which Tutsi invaders from Uganda would be stopped by

thousands of peasants armed with weapons. This is an argument that would later form the backbone of the case for French involvement in Rwanda. The regime in power, he said, had the advantage and the legitimacy of numbers. On the contrary, the Tutsi guerrillas from Uganda “when they leave the remote and sparsely populated areas to reach the heart of the country, will have to face thousands of Hutu peasants who lack guns and ammunition but who have shown in the past that they know how to handle machetes, bows and arrows”²⁶. There is no doubt that the argument, which today sounds like a grim prediction, was suggested to him by his Rwandan interlocutors.

For the time being, the Rwandan president wanted France to deliver conventional weapons and to provide air support for his troops. The ambassador made it clear to him that the intervention of the French air force could not be envisaged, but specified to his Parisian interlocutors: “I promised him that I would pass on this wish in the event of a new external aggression.”²⁷ This request was reiterated on 7 October 1990 by the Rwandan president, who was described as being “worried to the point of panic”:

*The president felt that the diplomatic phase had been exhausted and that if the French planes did not intervene within 24 or 36 hours, Kigali would not be able to hold out. I don't have the elements to assess the extent of the threat. If the information given by the President were confirmed, an immediate choice would have to be made between further engagement or a total evacuation requiring new military means.*²⁸

Can we believe that the diplomats at the Kigali post were misled by their interlocutors to precipitate a French intervention? Yes. At the end of November 1990, the defense attaché made a retrospective assessment of the events, which was completely revised, highlighting the fact that the troops that had entered Rwanda were under-equipped, obviously ill-prepared and unable to take Kigali:

In fact, it emerges from the analyses made and from the hearing of some prisoners that: The total number of aggressors engaged on Rwandan territory could have reached approximately 5,000 men, of which one third were Ugandan soldiers, while the other two thirds were recruited willingly or by force among the young, and even very young refugees. - Some of the latter had no weapons and collected those of their comrades after they had been killed. - In

general, the armament of these rebels consisted of individual weapons, machine guns and some support weapons. - They had a few Ugandan army trucks at their disposal at the beginning, but they soon seized civilian vehicles (trucks, pick-ups) in Rwanda.²⁹

In general, the threat to Kigali and the Rwandan government was greatly overestimated, even though it was not yet known in the early days of October. Faced with President Habyarimana's pressing demands for military intervention and support, it was up to the presidency in Paris to decide.

*1.1.2 The interpretation of the personal military staff:
towards the thesis of a "Ugandan-Tutsi offensive"*

In the first days of October 1990, President Mitterrand was informed of the situation in Kigali on a day-to-day basis and, at certain times, hour by hour. It was no longer a question of deciding to send men to Rwanda - the decision had been taken - but of knowing whether to go beyond the evacuation of all French nationals - which quickly appeared unnecessary - and to respond to the pressing demands of President Habyarimana, who was waiting for French military support to save his regime. Moreover, it was necessary to find words that justify, in terms of international law, a French intervention that no agreement provides for.

1.1.2.1 TAKING THE MEASURE OF EVENTS

On 2 October 1990, the presidency in Paris expected the Rwandan military authorities to request military assistance from Belgium and France. This posed two problems, which were identified in the first memo written by Admiral Lanxade, the President's Chief of Staff, that very day: on the one hand, it was not known whether the events at the border could be qualified as foreign aggression; on the other hand, there was no agreement between France and Rwanda that would provide an acceptable legal framework for an intervention. However, France would have every right to evacuate its nationals in Rwanda if they were threatened. The Chief of Staff writes:

According to Rwandan sources, the opposing forces numbered 800 to 1,000 men, were equipped with Ugandan uniforms and had infantry weapons. Rwandan military authorities have raised the possibility of requesting military assistance from France and Belgium.

The involvement of Ugandan forces has not been established. We do not have a defense agreement with Rwanda. The number of our nationals is said to be 750 people.³⁰

The same memo attributes the offensive to soldiers in Ugandan uniforms and describes it as a “rebel or foreign penetration.”³¹

The description of the situation on the ground by the presidential advisors evolves in step with messages from the post in Kigali, which we have seen easily relay unreliable information from the Rwandan authorities. However, the presidential advisors have other sources of information. One of the characteristics of the decision-making process concerning Rwanda is the direct and permanent intervention of President Habyarimana or some of his ministers with the French presidency. It is not unusual for ministers from African countries close to France to have direct access to their usual interlocutors at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Cooperation. There is evidence that the Rwandan foreign minister, also returning from the United States in the early days of October, was received in Paris “by the French authorities” at the beginning of the crisis.³² Less usual is the fact that President Habyarimana made numerous direct telephone calls to the presidency. In this way, in the first days of October, he exerted constant pressure for the French forces to become operationally involved in the conflict in Rwanda. Admiral Lanxade testified to this on 8 October.

I had two meetings by telephone with the Rwandan president, who renewed his requests for air support and the engagement of our ground units. I confirmed to him that we could not respond favorably to this request, indicating that the mere presence of our forces already had a stabilizing effect.³³

The President’s advisors in Paris know what is happening in Kigali in real time; sometimes they even seem to be ahead of the event. Thus Colonel Huchon, deputy to the chief of staff, announced, in a memo dated 4 October, to the attention of the Secretary General Jean-Louis Bianco, the disorder that was going to occur during the night of October 4 to 5 in Kigali. He wrote in effect:

*The rebel forces were held 70 km northeast of Kigali. Infiltrations of armed groups continued in the countryside. One-off terrorist-type actions are possible in the cities, as of tonight, including in the capital.*³⁴

It is also in this memo that we find the first use of the term “terrorist.”

The days that followed showed the desire of President Mitterrand’s personal military staff to see things a little more clearly and to clarify the real scale of the fighting, as well as the role of Uganda and the place of the Tutsi. On 8 October, Admiral Lanxade was still unsure of the reality of the military situation, since he wrote that “fighting seems to be taking place in the north-east of the country.”³⁵

1.1.2.2 THE BIRTH OF THE NOTION OF A “UGANDAN-TUTSI OFFENSIVE”

The main issue now lies elsewhere. In the space of a few days, an analysis of the situation was constructed in Paris that essentially followed the framework of interpretation developed within the French embassy in Kigali under the influence of the Rwandan authorities. By associating Uganda with the aggression, it had the advantage of legitimizing, as far as possible, an intervention. On 11 October, Admiral Lanxade defined the nature of the aggressors as follows: on the one hand, an ethnic group, the “Tutsi forces,” and on the other, a foreign state, Uganda. At this stage, however, it was still hoped that the reinforcements brought by Zaire to the Rwandan troops would be enough to stop the “Tutsi advance.” In fact, the intentions of each side are unclear.³⁶

In the end, on 15 October, Colonel Huchon used a notion in a memo to the President of the Republic that would have a certain longevity within the EMP, “the Ugandan-Tutsi offensive”: “In the North-East,” he wrote, “the Ugandan-Tutsi offensive continued to receive support in men and material from Uganda. The fighting continues around the town of Gabiro, which is alternately taken and retaken.”³⁷ The deputy chief of staff used the same phrase the next day: “Ugandan-Tutsi forces have retaken the towns of Gabiro and Nyagatare, taking advantage of the departure of Zairian forces.”³⁸ Ten days later, it was Admiral Lanxade’s turn to use the term: “About two thousand Ugandan-Tutsi are therefore currently isolated in Gabiro.”³⁹ He used it again

at the end of October: “Ugandan-Tutsi forces no longer have any formed units in Rwanda.”⁴⁰ The expression “Ugandan-Tutsi” makes it possible to synthesize the foreign character of the offensive, which authorizes the intervention,⁴¹ and the ethnic identification of its perpetrators, in order to better emphasize their minority character and their low level of representation. Colonel Huchon states: “The rest of Rwanda is calm, a situation that confirms the lack of popular support for the Tutsi offensive.”⁴²

The idea that the Hutu peasants were the majority in their country, and therefore destined to win in the long run, was counterbalanced by the observation that the Rwandan army was unable to organize the defense and that President Habyarimana was both very fragile and entirely dependent on French aid. France had to choose between the poorly defended and dependent “Hutu peasantry” and an enemy “abnormally” supported by a foreign country:

*Although the Tutsi offensive did not garner the hoped-for support from the Rwandan population, the situation of President Habyarimana remained very difficult. The Hutu peasantry, even though it has an 85% majority in Rwanda, will not be able to oppose an offensive by Tutsi forces alone, whose supply of arms and ammunition appears to be abnormally sustained. President Habyarimana's future depends more and more on the diplomatic and material aid that we can give him.*⁴³

From that first week of October, the interpretation of the situation in Rwanda was in some way frozen in the EMP. It was not the presence in Rwanda of several hundred French nationals that justified the intervention decided by the President - moreover, “no abuse against our nationals has been reported,”⁴⁴ as Colonel Huchon recognized very early on - but a position taken in a larger confrontation between a majority people and a minority. This minority, made up of exiles who wanted to return to their country, did not meet with any sympathy in the memos that we find in the archives of the EMP. Qualified as aggressors, rebels, then guerrillas or partisans, they represent a seed of destabilization in a friendly country.

1.1.3 The first steps of Operation Noroît

In Kigali, the elements of Noroît disembarked in two days: on 4

October at 9 p.m.: the EMT (tactical staff) and the 4th company of the 2nd REP. On 5 October at 1 p.m.: the 3rd company of the 3rd RPIMa.⁴⁵ Their mission was to evacuate French nationals and the French embassy. The 2nd REP had the means to communicate directly with France, as evidenced by the situation report written on 4 October 1990 by Colonel Huchon, deputy head of the EMP, for the attention of the Secretary General of the Élysée Palace: “The French company of the 2nd REP landed this evening at 7 p.m. (French time) in Kigali. Its mission is strictly to protect French nationals. This unit is equipped with communications means that ensure autonomous links with France.”⁴⁶

The French company of the 2nd REP (foreign parachute regiment - the Foreign Legion), which landed in Kigali at 7 p.m. French time,⁴⁷ and the 3rd RPIMa, which set up in two rotations on 5 October 1990,⁴⁸ were in fact elite units specializing in rapid intervention.⁴⁹ They had a total of 288 men on the ground.

They contributed to the evacuation of 280 French nationals and 208 foreigners⁵⁰ between 5 October and 9 October. Not all of them wanted to leave. 278 French nationals, including 180 in Kigali, 68 in Butare, 27 in Gisenyi and 3 in Ruhengeri, remained in Rwanda. On 8 October 1990, Admiral Lanxade notified François Mitterrand that “the evacuation of our nationals is continuing, as well as their regrouping in the capital under the protection of our troops.”⁵¹

The skills of the French troops sent to Kigali exceeded what was necessary for an evacuation. The parachute infantry detachment was immediately reinforced by a search team from the 13th parachute dragoon regiment.⁵² This regiment has been the human intelligence unit of strategic military intelligence since the mid-1960s. Its members are capable of infiltrating deep into the enemy’s military systems to provide information to the French command.

The choice of these units, taken from the French forces stationed in the Central African Republic and Chad in “conditions of extreme urgency,”⁵³ is, according to Colonel Huchon, the sign of an intervention considered important at the highest level. Their absence potentially destabilizes the entire French system in Africa. They are

not intended to remain in place for long.⁵⁴

On 8 October, some of the foundations of the French military intervention in Rwanda were laid: a clear refusal to directly engage the French air force or French troops; agreement, on the other hand, for arms deliveries and for the presence in Rwanda of elite troops responsible for ensuring the security of French nationals. The exact role of these special forces, which are supposed to have a “stabilizing role” that was never really explained, and which work together with the French military technical advisors already in place, is open to interpretation.

1.2 OTHER PLAYERS IN THE EARLY DAYS

The French were not alone in coming to Rwanda’s aid in October 1990. Zaire and Belgium sent soldiers. Unlike France, however, these countries repatriated them quickly.

1.2.1 Zaire: a limited military intervention

Zaire, which shares a border with Rwanda, was ruled in 1990 by Field Marshal Mobutu, who had come to power in a coup in 1965. Its relations with the various European countries involved in the Great Lakes region were delicate. In 1990, international opinion was still reeling from the massacre of students in Lubumbashi perpetrated by paramilitary forces of the regime during the night of 11-12 May 1990. The Belgian Prime Minister called for an international commission of inquiry, while the European Economic Community (EEC) expressed its “deep concern” and called for an investigation.⁵⁵ In response, President Mobutu decided to expel the Belgian development workers. Belgium froze its cooperation credits at the same time. The United States cut off its military and economic aid.⁵⁶

The French ambassador to Zaire, Henri Réthoré, reported on 5 October 1990 that the first Zairian troops - a battalion of the Presidential Special Division - had arrived in Rwanda on the evening of 4 October.⁵⁷ On 8 October, President Mobutu received President Habyarimana

aboard his boat on the Zaire River.⁵⁸ The French ambassador to Zaire later specified in a memo written to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on 18 October 1990 that Zaire had sent 1,200 men.⁵⁹ The Rwandan ambassador, Mr. Matungulu, invoked the security agreements linking the two countries within the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries to justify this deployment. However, the Zairian intervention was short-lived: the Zairian troops, having suffered “at least fifty deaths,” began their withdrawal on 20 October 1990.⁶⁰

The role of France in the Zairian intervention cannot be established with certainty, but it is possible that France supported it materially by taking charge of the transport of its troops. When Michel Lévêque, Director of African and Malagasy Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asked on 3 October 1990 about the measures to be considered to “show our support for President Habyarimana,” he mentioned supplying equipment and ammunition, sending a team from the DGSE, and envisaged sending troops to Rwanda that France had trained in Zaire:

The possibility of a military intervention by Zaire could be considered. Our ambassador in Kinshasa could approach President Mobutu to get his opinion on the possibility of an intervention by the Zairian army, in particular the 31st brigade (2,000 men), which we supervise and train.⁶¹

There are no documents available to indicate whether this suggestion was followed. The other point concerns the transport of these forces, at least 1,200 men, from Kinshasa - where they are based - to Goma. How was this done? Who took charge of the logistics and financing? On 12 October 1990, President Habyarimana, during one of his telephone conversations with Admiral Lanxade, at general staff headquarters, expressly mentioned the transport of Zairian troops. He wanted “France to provide him with Gazelle helicopters and rockets and to help with the airlift of Zairian troops.”⁶² Admiral Lanxade then reminded him of “the support that France had already given him, directly (delivery of munitions) or indirectly (sending troops to ensure the security and protection of our nationals and our interests). There was no question of going any further.”⁶³

1.2.2 *Belgium: domestic political reasons*

Belgium was also approached very early on by the Rwandan government. Thus, “on 2 October President Habyarimana, on his way back from the United States, made a stopover in Brussels and asked the King and the Prime Minister of Belgium for help.”⁶⁴ On 3 October 1990, Belgium decided to provide military aid⁶⁵ but did not announce it until the following day.⁶⁶ Belgium also provided ammunition transported by two C-130 aircraft⁶⁷ and deployed a large military force whose official aim was to protect the Belgian expatriate community in Rwanda: “According to the Director of Africa in Brussels, Belgian resources in Kigali included: a 727 and a DC 10 from Sabena and 8 C-130s from the army.”⁶⁸ However, Belgian nationals were not evacuated, which was a subject of tension with the RPF. According to the French ambassador in Kigali, Georges Martres, the French embassy in Bujumbura (Burundi) received “an urgent message from the rebel command center relayed to me by a senior officer of the Burundian army [which] has just reached me” indicating that:

*The pause currently observed in Kigali by the rebels is a ‘truce’ decided by ‘General’ Fred Rwigyema in order to give France and Belgium time to evacuate their nationals, because General Fred Rwigyema’s forces do not wish to confront European soldiers.*⁶⁹

The question of the evacuation of Belgian and French nationals was also an issue for President Habyarimana, who demanded, on the contrary, that they remain in the country.⁷⁰ Belgium quickly showed its willingness to withdraw its troops. On 18 October, the French ambassador in Nairobi, Kenya, deplored this: “I fear that I have understood,” he wrote, “that in the future the Belgians expect more from us than from themselves.”⁷¹

In addition, Belgium made significant diplomatic efforts in Rwanda and in the countries of the region during the month of October 1990. Thus, the Belgian Prime Minister, accompanied by a very large delegation including the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defense, visited Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya. The French ambassador in Kenya reported the Belgian Prime Minister’s remarks during a working dinner in Nairobi with the ambassadors of the twelve countries of the European Community. He noted a desire for rapid disengagement on the part of the Belgian government

for reasons of domestic policy: “If we leave,” the Prime Minister was quoted as saying, “Habyarimana will fall; if we stay, we could well fall.”⁷² The Belgian government decided to evacuate its troops, 535 men, on the following 1 November.⁷³ The ambassador stated:

The main reason was the Belgian political situation. It seems that the events in Rwanda put the Belgian government in the same precarious situation as the one in Kigali. On several occasions, the Prime Minister expressed his fears that his government would be overthrown by an unfavorable vote in the Chamber if the presence of troops continued beyond October.

The Belgian defense minister believes that France can take over the security of the Rwandan regime because decisions regarding military commitments are not subject to immediate parliamentary censure:

In anticipation of today’s meeting with President Habyarimana and the President of the Republic, the Minister of Defense told me verbatim: “Tell your ministry that, for parliamentary reasons, we cannot supply arms or certain types of additional ammunition. The French, on the other hand, have no such constraints [...]. Make it clear that there is no question of our participating in a peacekeeping force. The Rwandans will no doubt ask you to support it.”⁷⁴

A few days later, on 23 October 1990, the French ambassador in Nairobi gave an insight into the complex motivations of both sides. The Belgian Prime Minister, Wilfried Martens, was satisfied with his meetings with the Ugandan and Tanzanian presidents, but he was worried about President Mobutu’s “shenanigans”: “Mr. Martens believes that he is trying to recover Belgian diplomatic advances and to organize a regional conference centered on the Great Lakes region for his own benefit. In this way, he would pull the rug out from under Brussels and appear to be the wise man of the region.”⁷⁵

1.2.3 A solicitation from Kampala: getting along with the RPF?

Uganda occupies a special place in this chessboard since the “assailants” denounced by President Habyarimana come from its territory and it is common knowledge that the leaders

of the “rebellion” are officers or former officers of its army. President Museveni was therefore a key player in the diplomatic exchanges that accompanied the October crisis, and the French ambassador in Kampala a valuable source of information. On 11 October, he transmitted a message whose content contrasted with the information from Kigali that had been coming in over the past ten days: why should France not take the side of the RPF? He had met with the main RPF leaders and transmitted to Paris the main terms of these meetings. They contained the arguments that would be used by the RPF in the years to come: President Habyarimana’s regime was authoritarian and corrupt, and he was like President Pinochet when he locked his opponents in a stadium before executing them - an allusion to the events in Kigali on 5 October and the days that followed. It is notable that the RPF refers to political opponents and does not use any ethnic adjectives. The RPF would accept that Belgium and France maintain troops in Kigali for the safety of their citizens, but will fight them directly if they engage with the FAR. The RPF seems confident that it would win if a face-off between its troops and the FAR occurred without foreign interference:

My first aide received two RPF representatives at their request, Mr. Pasteur Bizimungu and Mr. Tito (pseudonym), members of the executive committee of the organization [...].

- 1. The objective of the RPF is to liberate the country from the dictatorship of Habyarimana, the question of refugees is certainly essential but it should not mask all the internal problems in Rwanda (generalized corruption, misappropriation of international aid, political assassinations, etc.).*
- 2. It is desirable that foreigners continue to be evacuated from Rwanda; a face-to-face confrontation between inkotanyi fighters and Habyarimana’s armed forces without outside interference would avoid any blunders.*
- 3. The RPF is neither anti-French nor anti-Belgian. But if necessary, it will fight the detachments of these two powers. But even if it should come to such an end (sic), afterwards it will have to cooperate again. After all, Rwanda has a common past with France and Belgium which is not negative.*
- 4. The Front would accept that French and Belgian paratroopers remain in Kigali in reduced numbers for strictly humanitarian reasons (protection and evacuation of nationals still present in Rwanda). On the other hand, it would not understand why France, the country of human rights, would keep a large number of soldiers on the ground, thus allowing Habyarimana to*

emulate Pinochet by locking up his opponents in a stadium and ordering summary executions.

5. The Front is not a priori opposed to dialogue and is not hostile to the idea of an international conference [...].

*6. The threats against French and Belgian representations and communities in East Africa are not the work of the RPF. They emanate either from agitated individuals who are beyond the control of the Front, or from provocateurs in the service of the Habyarimana regime. Gérard.*⁷⁶

1.3 ORGANIZING THE FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE

From 15 October onwards, the situation in Kigali stabilized in a new configuration, marked by the presence of a large contingent of elite French troops in the capital, which entered into contact with the Military Cooperation Mission (MMC, *Mission militaire de coopération*) already in place. This was the beginning of what would eventually prove to be one of the elements of political fragility in the French system: the extensive involvement of the French alongside the Rwandan authorities and the hierarchy of the Rwandan armed forces.

1.3.1 Highly involved military cooperants (technical advisors)

The French defense attaché, Colonel Galinié, maintains remarkably close relations with the Rwandan authorities and the hierarchy of the Rwandan armed forces. This can expose him, as we saw during the first week of October, to a lack of distance in the processing of information. In addition, the French officers and technicians integrated into the Rwandan forces to give them advice also seem to be heavily involved in the command, developing friendly relationships that could become difficult to manage. The *Noroît* forces, which were not originally intended to stay, are in principle less exposed to this danger. On the other hand, their professionalism and the quality of their equipment tip the balance of power in favor of the Rwandan government. The same is true of arms deliveries, which, if carried out within a legal framework, expose the French government to accusations of bias in favor of the FAR.

1.3.1.1 A VERY PRESENT DEFENSE ATTACHÉ

The defense attaché and head of the Military Assistance Mission (MAM) in Kigali is a privileged interlocutor of the highest local authorities.⁷⁷ The report he wrote in November 1990⁷⁸ indicates that he met President Habyarimana four times on October 6, 8, 14 and 16, 1990.⁷⁹ This proximity allowed him to collect information on the military situation “and always to try to bring appeasement by explaining that certain tactical measures could turn the situation to the advantage of the FAR,”⁸⁰ thus playing the role of military advisor to the Rwandan president, the head of the army.

According to his report, Colonel Galinié was the de facto military and political advisor to the Rwandan President, and was also the main contact for the Rwandan Minister of Defense and the various staffs. He met Colonel Rusatira at the beginning of the offensive “and [did] not stop visiting him afterwards”⁸¹ and met Colonel Sagatwa, the Rwandan president’s private secretary, on several occasions. Colonel Galinié recognizes that these trusting relations are quite different from the treatment reserved for the Belgian and German representatives, who were slowed down in their steps, he writes, by “the maneuver of misinformation conducted from Europe, Burundi and especially Uganda, leaving them to believe in the revolt of an oppressed people.”⁸²

He maintained a close relationship with his Rwandan interlocutors, whose discourse he espoused, recognizing in his report a “camaraderie” characterized first and foremost by “the expression of encouragement rather than specific advice.”⁸³ His advice to the Rwandan officers “was first of all an incentive to finally adopt offensive behavior, and then turned into a real participation in the conception of the maneuver, accompanied by the reminder of certain procedures.”⁸⁴ Colonel Galinié advised the operational command of the FAR.

The military attaché of the French embassy also had the ear of the Rwandan president. He is, if necessary, the interlocutor of foreign diplomatic representations when the ambassador is absent.⁸⁵ Thus, on 2 October he met successively with the German ambassador, the chargés d’affaires of the United States, South Korea and the USSR, as well as the Italian consul general and the head of the Canadian cooperation office,

who were worried about the situation, and tried to “calm their concerns about the safety of their nationals.”⁸⁶ On the return of Georges Martres on 5 October 1990, the defense attaché was informed by the ambassador of “the important contacts he had had and the comments made by the people he met.”⁸⁷ This “exemplary relationship” allowed Colonel Galinié to participate in the drafting of the TD Kigali and in the preparation of diplomatic meetings, notably with President Habyarimana. Finally, he coordinated military cooperation activities.

1.3.1.2 THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE MISSION: FRIENDLY ADVISOR

The few French officers and instructors belonging to the Military Assistance Mission (MAM) have been in place in Kigali for years. They are present in Rwanda by virtue of military cooperation agreements dating back to 1975, which focus on training and, in the event of a crisis, help to ensure the safety of French nationals. In his November 1990 report on the October crisis, the defense attaché in Kigali emphasized the extent to which the ties between the French military cooperants and their Rwandan counterparts had been strengthened by the crisis, to the point of creating a solid friendship.

At first, the French cooperants had to distance themselves from the Rwandan military. On 3 October 1990, Colonel Galinié ordered them to leave their homes if they were living in a Rwandan military camp with their families, to regroup on the hills of Kimihurura and Kiyovu in Kigali, to put on French military uniforms and to “cease all missionary activities for the benefit of the Rwandan armed forces.”⁸⁸ However, the intelligence work that they were asked to do was ultimately for the benefit of the Rwandan armed forces⁸⁹ since it should allow the French to “decide on the content and form of the advice to be given to partners.”⁹⁰

The French cooperants temporarily obliged to leave their positions within the Rwandan combatant units were all the more available to give them the benefit of their advice at all levels, forming a “new friendship” in the midst of adversity, a friendship that Colonel Galinié did not see as perhaps not opportune.

Of this close cooperation he writes:

It never ceased despite the withdrawal within the units. On the contrary,

it was facilitated by this provision. Indeed, it allowed us to advise the officers in a discreet manner without ill-intentioned observers being able to claim that we were participating in military actions. Our interventions at all levels (presidency, staff, commanders of units engaged in combat), at first cautious when it was difficult to know exactly the nature of the disturbances and the popular support of the rebels, were developed, in accordance with the instructions received, when it became clear that it was an external abuse, without an audience in the population [...].

All this encouragement and advice led to a strong suggestion of strategies, maneuvers, means to be implemented, procedures to be used, supplies to be favored...

Partners, from the highest officials to the most humble, were particularly sensitive to this behavior. Indeed, they have not ceased to express genuine gratitude and a new friendship, going so far as to declare that our role has been primordial in their success.⁹¹

According to the French defense attaché, a “great fraternity of arms”⁹² was established, resulting from the missions given to Colonel Galinié, notably directly by the deputy chief of staff at the Élysée, Colonel Huchon.

1.3.1.3 NOROÎT: INFORMING, DISSUADING

The presence of Noroît troops in Rwanda has a different impact. By demonstrating their ability to rapidly organize an evacuation, they reassure and thus contribute to keeping French and European nationals in the country, which is of great political importance to President Habyarimana. Thus, on 8 October, 1990, a convoy, escorted by soldiers who arrived as part of Operation Noroît, “brought back to Kigali more than 160 people, including 54 French citizens, residing in the Ruhengeri-Gisenyi regions. The majority of them embarked that same evening by French military airplane for Bangui or regular commercial flights to Europe.”⁹³ As we have seen, between 2 and 9 October, 1990, 313 French nationals in Rwanda and 371 expatriates of all nationalities left the country thanks to the French forces.

At the same time, their presence alone ensured a deterrent function. In October, the French troops of Noroît set up a defense system for the embassy⁹⁴ and occupied the

Kigali airport, where they held the control tower and the terminal. In addition, Colonel Galinié set out to establish “a reserved element, ready to intervene at any point in the city of Kigali.”⁹⁵ The units were divided between the embassy, the French school and the airport. After the arrival of the 3rd RPIMa, the structure was reviewed and one company set up in the urban area at the embassy, the cultural center and the French school, while the second company went to the Meridien Hotel and the airport. The units are also in charge of specific “external” missions. The first, which took place on 8 and 9 October, 1990, gave the French the opportunity to get closer to the country’s borders to better understand what was going on there: it involved the evacuation of nationals from Ruhengeri and Gisenyi. The second concerns the escort of the French consul general in Douala who wishes to meet with French expatriates living in Gisenyi.⁹⁶

There is a lack of information at this level about what the *Noroît* detachments responsible for reconnaissance and intelligence missions actually do,⁹⁷ but their mere presence has a dissuasive effect that unbalances the balance of power in favor of the Rwandan authorities.

1.3.2 Arms in exchange for a democratic process: the terms of the contract

The second component of French military aid is the delivery of arms. For France, this is the quickest and least visible way of helping a friendly country, and Rwanda, every time there is an alert, gets into the habit of asking for urgent deliveries that are not granted without measure or compensation. A sort of deal was struck between France and Rwanda: military support in exchange for progress in the democratization of the country and respect for human rights.

This is, of course, only one aspect of a more general policy, the roots of which we will see later. It is however remarkable that the terms of the exchange appear in the archives on the occasion of an arms delivery, which also reveals the Achilles’ heel of French policy. Once the deliveries had been made, the French troops had arrived, and the threat had been removed, there was no longer any real incentive for President Habyarimana and his government to make the required efforts, as long as there were political obstacles in the way.

1.3.2.1 THE OCTOBER 1990 DELIVERIES

As we shall see, there are two types of arms deliveries: sales that follow precise protocols, and non-remunerated transfers, which consist of giving arms or, more often, ammunition to a friendly army without compensation. The deliveries of ammunition and equipment to Rwanda that began in the days following the offensive belong to the second category. The Rwandan authorities, led by President Habyarimana, saw this as a guarantee of their country's survival. Their orders were precise and numerous. As early as 3 October, 1990, the request for aid formulated by the French ambassador in Kigali, Georges Martres, mentioned ammunition.⁹⁸ In this message, entitled "Request for French intervention to help Rwanda contain and repel the invader who is dangerously threatening its territorial integrity,"⁹⁹ the diplomat transmitted the request for bombing of the invaders by the French air force - which was refused - but also for deliveries of ammunition - which were granted. A memo dated 4 October, 1990, lists various models of ammunition for helicopters, rockets, as well as mortar ammunition and shells.¹⁰⁰

In Kigali, Colonel Galinié devoted a great deal of energy to obtaining ammunition for the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) by contacting both the headquarters in Paris and the *Mission militaire de coopération* (MMC) at the Ministry of Cooperation. What he did not get from one side, he hoped to find from the other.¹⁰¹ Initially, this involved 30,000 rounds of 9 mm ammunition, 2,040 explosive 20 mm shells, and 2,004 explosive 60 mm shells, "at the expense of the EMA."¹⁰² Colonel Galinié also sent a message to the Ministry of Cooperation to take stock of the FAR's needs: there was a shortage of 20 and 60 mm shells, rockets for helicopters, and 60 and 90 mm ammunition for AML (light self-propelled guns).¹⁰³ The Rwandan Armed Forces were not able to obtain the necessary supplies for the FAR.

The Rwandan Armed Forces did not hesitate to blackmail their French ally, sometimes with the least acceptable arguments. The 13 October message from Ambassador Martres probably relays arguments that were provided to him by his Rwandan interlocutors. It is no longer a question of ammunition, which is fairly simple to obtain, but of more complex armaments that require the

approval of a specialized commission. The FAR staff, boasting of the success of the destruction of what it presented as an RPF fuel convoy, by Gazelle helicopters, “insistently” demanded two additional helicopters, Milan missiles, rockets and shells.¹⁰⁴

The exact function of these arms deliveries by France is also political. The ambassador’s message, relaying the arguments of his Rwandan interlocutors, evokes a sort of mass uprising of the Rwandan peasantry, who, armed with bows and machetes, would go to the defense of their country and whose Rwandan armed forces, equipped by France with modern weapons, would simply support the patriotic effort:

*The fact remains that the government forces suffer from their small numbers and lack of means [...] and cannot fully exploit the loyalty of the peasants who are increasingly participating in the military action through self-defense groups armed with bows and machetes. They, too, could only reverse the situation definitively in their favor with sustained external assistance, hence the appeal to friends, to France in particular.*¹⁰⁵

This diplomatic telegram from Kigali has a handwritten annotation “for the President to read.” François Mitterrand was therefore probably aware of it.

1.3.2.2 TOWARDS A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION:

THE TWO PRESIDENTS’ TELEPHONE MEETING (18 OCTOBER)

The preparation of the 18 October 1990 telephone meeting between President François Mitterrand and President Habyarimana, during which the issue of arms deliveries was to be discussed, makes it possible to identify the terms of the exchange. They were stated in very precise terms on 16 October 1990 by Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, the President’s Africa advisor. Referring to the arms aid granted by France to Rwanda, he pleaded for it to be significant in order to be able to put effective pressure on President Habyarimana to obtain changes on his part in terms of democracy and respect for human rights: “This aid would allow France to forcefully demand respect for human rights and a rapid opening up of democracy once calm has returned.”¹⁰⁶

Jean-Christophe Mitterrand develops a strategic analysis of

the issue of arms deliveries to Rwanda. Direct intervention by France is impossible, everyone agrees. What remains is the delivery of arms. Limited deliveries would not guarantee President Habyarimana sufficient security to implement the requested policy. Only large-scale deliveries would ensure the regime's security, provided that it could demand "respect for human rights" and "democratic openness:

The Rwandans are asking France to intervene directly militarily and to help supply them with ammunition and weapons. If the first point is impossible, the level of the second (ammunition and arms) poses a political question: - minimum deliveries allow the army to maintain a status quo on the ground with a risk of collapse if this war lasts too long (small army, heavy equipment - helicopters, light armored vehicles, AMLs - tiring quickly) - a serious logistical flow that allows Habyarimana to score decisive military points so that he can negotiate from a comfortable position. This assistance would allow France to forcefully demand respect for human rights and a rapid democratic opening once calm has returned.¹⁰⁷

This political dilemma has very concrete consequences: depending on the President's choice, the plane that leaves for Kigali will be almost empty or "stuffed" with weapons and ammunition. And the president's deputy chief of staff is in charge of it. The final paragraph contains an incentive to choose the option of a major arms delivery: Jean-Christophe Mitterrand emphasizes that the Rwandans are confronted by an adversary that is supported and equipped by Libyans, who are professional and aggressive:

Colonel Huchon of the EMP is working on these two hypotheses. A plane should leave Kigali on Wednesday morning. Depending on the decision, it will be almost empty (additional delivery) or full, which will allow the regular troops to resume the offensive or at least to contain one. The last point confirmed by the DGSE is that Libyans, members of the special services, have been seen with the rebels and even recognized. They are part of a very organized and "hard" core.

The presence of Libyans, which has been a lasting concern for the French authorities, will not be proven.¹⁰⁸

The military staff contributed to the study of the issue by providing

an update on 18 October on the ammunition delivered urgently to the Rwandan Armed Forces since the beginning of the offensive. On the one hand, this is ammunition (cartridges, shells, rockets), the cost of which has been charged to the budgets of the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Cooperation.¹⁰⁹ Other equipment was acquired from manufacturers whose sales are normally subject to approval by an interministerial commission. As of 18 October 1990, six approvals had been granted, including encryption and transmission equipment, rockets, ammunition and explosives, and equipment for the Gazelle helicopters. The delivery of three new Gazelle SA 342 L1 helicopters with spare parts is planned.¹¹⁰

On the same day, 18 October, a memo from Claude Arnaud,¹¹¹ who was in charge of African and Madagascan affairs at the Presidency, and who was also preparing for the telephone meeting between François Mitterrand and President Habyarimana, examined more specifically the question of military aid requested by the Rwandan president: "President Habyarimana will most likely request renewed military aid from France."¹¹² Claude Arnaud has a more measured view of future engagement. The essential has been done, he thinks, there is no need to commit further. The troops sent immediately to Kigali had the mission of protecting and evacuating French nationals, but by their very presence they strengthened - the word is used - the position of President Habyarimana, who was under great threat. France continues to supply rockets for the Gazelle helicopters that provide superiority to the Rwandan forces on the ground. There is no urgency, however, to accelerate the delivery of arms, which are sufficient and appropriate.

[...] There is no doubt that the mere presence of this contingent in Kigali has greatly strengthened the President's position at a critical time [...]

It must be emphasized that we have responded favorably to requests from the Rwandan authorities for the supply of ammunition, and in particular we have sent rockets for the "Gazelle" helicopters. A plane carrying additional rockets left this very morning for Kigali.

Requests for the purchase of equipment (helicopters, mortars) are not as urgent. They can be examined according to the evolution of the military situation and availability. It should be noted that

*Rwanda has five armed "Gazelle" helicopters. The maintenance of these is carried out by our military cooperants, and we can continue and even increase our assistance in this area (supply of spare parts for the AMLs if necessary, maintenance of other equipment.*¹¹³

It was therefore time to discuss with President Habyarimana the date of return to France of the units deployed in Kigali: "One of the companies could be withdrawn with the cease-fire, the other once the situation has stabilized."¹¹⁴

In Kigali, the ambassador was under pressure. He developed another set of arguments in favor of supporting President Habyarimana: the idea that, even from a humanitarian point of view, it was necessary to remain in Kigali. The violence that accompanied the October offensive undermined the support that the German and even Belgian governments could have given to the Rwandan regime. Faced with the hesitations of his counterparts, meeting at the initiative of the German ambassador, the French ambassador developed the following argument: it is true that the human rights violations are the fault of President Habyarimana's regime. If he is not supported, then the RPF will take power. Since the RPF does not represent the majority of the population, by virtue of ethnic classification, the situation will degenerate. To avoid this, it is necessary, from a human rights perspective, to support the Rwandan president while trying to put pressure on him. The exchanges of 18 October between the ambassadors, alarmed by the human rights violations and the prospect of destabilization of the entire region, are summarized in a diplomatic telegram from the Kigali post preserved in the archives of an Africa advisor at the Élysée. The meeting, writes Georges Martres, was prompted by an initiative of the German ambassador. The ambassadors met:

*To examine the approach that the German ambassador was asked to make, on behalf of the community, to express the latter's concerns about the evolution of the situation in Rwanda, its concern about the measures taken that would be contrary to respect for human rights, and its appeal to the government of that country to take all the necessary steps to restore national cohesion and stability in the sub-region.*¹¹⁵

The underlying question is: can we let the fortune of arms decide the fate of the regime in Kigali? The Germans and Austrians have been asked for military equipment of a logistical nature

(means of transport, clothing). The German government is “reluctant to respond favorably.”¹¹⁶ The Belgian government is examining a request for authorization to export military equipment purchased by Rwanda. The French ambassador continues, “I have indicated that the deliveries made by the French government were part of the annual technical military aid granted to the Rwandan government.”¹¹⁷

The ambassador continues his text with an argument that it is difficult to know to what extent it is shared by his counterparts. The RPF, he writes, is not representative enough to be allowed to overthrow the Rwandan government. It appears that the RPF, which is clearly dominated by the Tutsi, “whose base in the Hutu milieu remains to be demonstrated (as evidenced by the calm that currently reigns in the country), is not a democratic alternative to Habyarimana’s government (whatever the criticisms that may be levelled against it (nepotism, corruption and bad management).”¹¹⁸ Georges Martres believes that, if one considers the issue from a humanitarian point of view, one must support President Habyarimana:

*The outright withdrawal of Franco-Belgian troops and the general evacuation of foreign nationals would place a heavy responsibility on the Western powers that are interested, for humanitarian reasons, in the future of Rwanda. Supporting President Habyarimana by encouraging him to open up politically and ethnically in a way that has been too timid so far remains the only acceptable solution. The Belgian ambassador hoped to convince his government.*¹¹⁹

The available archives do not contain a record of the telephone conversation between President Mitterrand and his Rwandan counterpart. However, a memo from Jean-Christophe Mitterrand dated the following day, 19 October, gives clues to one of its consequences: French support, in parallel with military aid, for a negotiated solution, the elaboration of which would be entrusted to the heads of State of the region. The Rwandan president seems to have obtained an extension of the French military presence in Rwanda, but France is now turning to diplomacy. It was decided to organize a trip by Jacques Pelletier, Minister of Cooperation, to the Great Lakes region.¹²⁰ The French government was not prepared to accept this decision. Betting on a negotiated settlement of the conflict, France, writes Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, hoped that an

“African” solution to the conflict would emerge, a term that undoubtedly covers the idea that mediators would be sought in Rwanda’s neighboring countries.¹²¹

This trip took place from 6 to 8 November 1990. Jean-Christophe Mitterrand accompanied the Minister for Cooperation.

1.3.3 Cautious hesitations without any prospects

The give-and-take policy was not without its dangers. As early as October 1990, dissonant voices were heard suggesting that France might be on the wrong track and that it would probably be better not to become more involved in Rwanda. This was only the beginning of a phenomenon that marked the entire 1990-1994 period: why did calls for a change in policy in Rwanda, or at least for a major change in policy, remain stubbornly unheeded? It is possible to hypothesize that each one speaks from the particular point of view of an institution and that, on the whole, the warnings do not carry enough weight in the face of political will. For the moment, these are only the first questions.

1.3.3.1 CAUTION AT THE PRESIDENCY

Within the President’s personal military staff, on 11 October 1990, Admiral Lanxade raised the question of the behavior of the Rwandan armed forces. He did not advocate a total withdrawal of French forces, but he did sketch out the idea of a partial disengagement so that France would not be associated with the “serious abuses” that marred the operations underway:

Zairian aid should make it possible to contain the Tutsi advance if substantial reinforcements, particularly from Uganda, do not upset the current balance.

With this significant reserve, it would be possible to consider reducing our presence¹²² in Rwanda by withdrawing one company at the beginning of next week.

A single company would then remain in Kigali, to ensure the security and possible evacuation of our nationals.

This withdrawal would also allow us to avoid appearing to be too involved in supporting the Rwandan forces if serious abuses against the population were to come to light in the current operations.¹²³

For the time being, the question remains unresolved, and the Armed Forces

Staff is prepared to take precautionary measures: discreetly relieve the troops without changing their position. This is equivalent to staying, even temporarily:

The Armed Forces Staff will proceed with the relief of this company by a strictly equivalent unit, during the night of 16 to 17 October. This technical operation will be carried out with the greatest discretion. [...] This changeover in no way anticipates the date of the reduction in our presence in Rwanda.¹²⁴

1.3.3.2 THE CRITICAL POINT OF VIEW OF THE DEFENSE

It is, however, in the Ministry of Defense that the criticism takes shape. The Minister of Defense, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, was not, as we have seen, in favor of France's intervention in Rwanda. At the end of October, his services produced an analysis that maintained that President Habyarimana was not a reliable partner for the democratization of the country and that he was, on the contrary, part of the problem.

The opinion of the General Secretariat of National Defense (SGDN): Leave

The memorandum of the General Secretariat of National Defense of 26 October 1990, entitled "Rwanda: the limits of French involvement"¹²⁵ was addressed to the President of the Republic's personal military staff and was also addressed to Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and the Prime Minister.¹²⁶ No one can say that they were not informed. The Strategic Studies and Documentation Department of the General Secretariat, whose function is to inform the government and French administrations on the strategic issues of the moment, is very critical of French choices in Rwanda. The risk in Rwanda comes not from the attackers but from our partners. What is dangerous is the way in which the Rwandan authorities approach the problems by exploiting ethnic rivalries without hesitating to provoke massacres. If what is perceived as a guerrilla war takes hold over time, it risks degenerating into major ethnic clashes. The single party in power has already launched the Hutu peasants on a hunt for the rebels:

The Rwandan army, because of its structural weaknesses, does not seem to be able to reduce subversion with its own means and to control the borders in order to prevent further infiltration. Under these conditions, and unless a

*negotiation process is initiated, the guerrilla warfare is likely to last and, consequently, to degenerate into inter-ethnic clashes.*¹²⁷

*This is already beginning to happen: some Hutu peasants, formed into self-defense groups by the MRND (Mouvement de la Révolution Nationale pour le développement- the only party in power) and actively participating in the “rebel hunt,” have already been known to commit massacres.*¹²⁸

President Habyarimana cannot be counted on to control his troops and find a viable political solution. It is even from him that the conflagration risks coming if he finds it more convenient, in order to save his regime, to “launch a holy war against the Tutsi. He will not hesitate to find excuses for the abuses.”¹²⁹ The Rwandan president in fact:

[...] hesitates mainly to solve in depth the problem of the Tutsi minority and the presence abroad of a very strong community of this ethnic group. Finally, in order to save his regime, he risks reviving old rivalries by calling for a kind of “holy war” against the Tutsi.

*Several hundred of them [the Tutsi] were reportedly massacred by the military in the early days of the fighting. President Habyarimana, who does not dispute the facts, claims that these were “rebels” dressed in civilian clothes.*¹³⁰

While France’s support has been discreet enough up until now to not provoke too many reactions, it is clear that remaining exposes it to the risk of taking sides in an internal conflict without any political gain for France. Why support President Habyarimana to this degree? The survival of the Rwandan president’s regime is not assured and France’s relations with the RPF have not been unfavorable thus far:

*By maintaining our position for longer or by becoming more involved, we risk no longer being able to claim neutrality. We could mortgage the future to a regime that is not assured of its survival, while the rebellion is not hostile to us for the moment. Finally, if the authorities tolerate, or even encourage, abuses or if arbitrariness definitely prevails, we could be accused of having supported a power that is ready to go to any extreme.*¹³¹

In doing so, the SGDN does not indicate that it is appropriate to leave Rwanda immediately, but proposes an option: to step back by withdrawing troops and to pilot a negotiation between the conflicting parties. If France’s neutrality became more credible, it could act as a mediator between the parties. It would only be necessary for the negotiation to be

“limited in time and sufficiently precise in its objectives to avoid any risk of slippage or stalemate.”¹³²

The analysis of a soldier in the field

In November, it was the military that proposed that the Noroît troops leave Rwanda. The military threat had become null and void and the political danger was high. Colonel Thomann, commander of the 8th RPIMA and commander of the troops present in Rwanda, wrote a report on 9 November, after Jacques Pelletier’s visit to Rwanda, on “The orientations for the future of Noroît.” On the military level, his assessment was clear: there was no longer any danger:

As far as the general military situation is concerned, skirmishes continue on the borders, in the northeast and northwest. Despite the tactical blunders of the Rwandan army, whose main quality is clearly not the art of maneuver, the strictly military danger can now be considered very minimal. The FAR are dealing with gangs, more or less armed, who are trying to create a guerrilla situation by skirmishing on the border. Their idea of maneuvering may be to “cut off” the main trade routes with neighboring countries by creating insecurity through episodic harassment.

*Finally, the rebellion seems increasingly unstructured, without a unified command, and closer to banditry than to conventional military action. Unless there is a new development or a major element that has escaped analysis [...] it can be considered that there is no longer a major military threat.*¹³³

He therefore proposed to the Minister that half of Noroît be disengaged within two weeks and that the withdrawal be definitive within a month.¹³⁴ Colonel Thomann’s analysis was not limited to a military reading of the situation. He underlines the risks that the Tutsi and moderate Hutu are running:

*On the other hand, there remains a risk of inter-ethnic conflagration, insofar as the population is strongly encouraged to be “vigilant” to counter the rebellion and detect suspects. This vigilance translates into fairly aggressive reflexes in the villages (roadblocks, local controls) which can degenerate into settling of scores under the guise of security, the main victims being of course the minority Tutsi or the Hutu who are allegedly affiliated with them. It would probably not take much pushing to set off a fire.*¹³⁵

In November 1990, the French command therefore clearly indicated the risk to the Tutsi population.

If Colonel Thomann's vocabulary places social relations within conservative frameworks by evoking relations of subservience of certain Hutu to the Tutsi, he is already describing with precision the mechanisms that fuel tensions. He points to the discourse of the internal threat in the face of the rebellion, but also to the idea that suspects are hiding within the population. He emphasizes the forms of social organization that can be used for this "vigilance," which is all the easier to implement because, as he pointed out earlier in his report, the country is very strongly structured in "hills." Thus, he clearly shows how, as of November 1990, the hunt for suspects within the Rwandan population spread throughout the social and political body of the country. Even if he does not hastily link RPF and Tutsi, he does not misunderstand the fact that the aggressive vigilance against suspects mechanically targets Tutsi.

It is a disturbing portrait of the Rwandan population that is drawn, fueled by direct exchanges that the commander of the 8th RPIMa had with President Habyarimana:

On the whole, the Rwandan president had a very positive attitude, but he feared that a policy of openness toward the rebellion would not be well received by a population that was highly "motivated" and not very keen on compromise with the "enemy." A certain ambiguity therefore remains, because the official desire for openness must be reconciled with the concern to maintain the support of a "vigilant" population. The president's room for maneuver thus seems relatively narrow.¹³⁶

Stressing the political importance that the Rwandan president attaches to mobilizing the population to be "vigilant" against an internal threat, the senior officer does not launch into an analysis of the sincerity of his interlocutor, but shows how Rwandan opinion is already radicalized on the subject.

Thus, on 9 November 1990, the main French official in charge of military operations in Rwanda reported to Paris the extent to which Rwandan society as a whole was affected by fears of an internal enemy and by a "vigilance" that led it to organize itself on the basis of existing social structures, in one way or another; it was also directed, at least in fact, against the Tutsi of Rwanda and the Hutu who were identified as being close to them. The report circulated widely among

the general staff in Paris.¹³⁷

Colonel Thomann was partially heard. At the end of November, when half of Noroît had already been repatriated, the Army Chief of Staff, General Schmitt, wrote a memo to the office of the Minister of Defense requesting that the repatriations continue:

With calm returning to Rwanda, it is possible to consider, as of now, the withdrawal of the Guépard detachment that is there. Consequently, I have the honor to ask you to authorize me to transfer the elements present in Rwanda from Kigali to Bangui. This solution would make it possible to avoid calling for new reinforcements from France in the event of a deterioration of the situation in the Central African capital.¹³⁸

1.3.3.3 A DIRECT LINE TO KIGALI AT THE EMP

However, both the personal military staff and the Minister of Defense came up against the firm will of those who, interpreting the will of President Mitterrand, wanted a strong intervention alongside President Habyarimana. Among them was Colonel Huchon, deputy to the chief of staff, who seemed to have a personal link with the defense attaché in Kigali, whose analysis of the situation was clear: President Habyarimana had to be supported, the RPF was an external enemy, and it was thanks to the presence of the French army that the “abuses” against the Tutsi would be avoided.

To keep himself informed, the deputy chief of staff sent daily handwritten faxes to Colonel Galinié, the defense attaché in Kigali, with whom he was on first-name terms and asked to destroy his messages after reading them. Faxes are the most discreet means of communication. This sheds light on the question of the existence of a direct communication channel that would go from the Élysée to the French embassy in Rwanda, bypassing in a certain way the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs, and allowing the President’s personal military staff to make its views prevail. The traces of this direct relationship are real. The archives kept at the Service historique de la Défense contain a series of handwritten faxes addressed by Colonel Huchon, deputy to the EMP, to Colonel Galinié, including the one dated 25 October: he was probably reacting to

the Thomann report mentioned above. This document bears the mention “To be destroyed after reading like all my handwritten messages.”

The problem dealt with that day is not important in itself, but it indicates a way of doing things. France was in diplomatic difficulty and needed to find arguments to defend its presence in Rwanda. Ideally, it would have proof that the country was facing aggression from a foreign country, and the capture of the commander of a Ugandan brigade could provide the hoped-for proof. The deputy chief of staff asked the defense attaché in Kigali to mount a convincing communication operation. France is very close to being forced to do what Belgium did: withdraw its troops.

I received your update of 24 October. In the spirit of my fax of yesterday, is it not possible to promote the capture of John Bosco Narygira in the press as proof of the involvement of the Ugandan army, the commander of the Ugandan brigade in Sorom [?] captured in Rwanda?¹³⁹ We absolutely need to explain to international opinion that this is indeed an offensive by the Ugandan army (deserters or not) and not an internal rebellion. Otherwise we will be put at odds and will be forced, politically speaking, to align ourselves with the Belgians. With kind regards. PS Your Kigali TD does not serve President H. Too bad.¹⁴⁰

“The massacre of 700,000 Tutsi”

What is this diplomatic telegram that the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidency says does not serve President Habyarimana? It was an analysis made by the defense attaché in which the risk of the massacre of 700,000 Tutsi by the Hutu is mentioned in full.

Colonel Galinié endeavors to formalize France’s reasons for engagement in this analysis. He thus sent to Paris on 24 October 1990 - the day of the border attack - a detailed report on the situation in Rwanda that proposed a global analysis of the situation, combining a summary presentation of the position of the media, an analysis of the military situation and a description of the position of the Rwandan government.

With respect to the media, it appears that the Rwandan president and France are on the defensive. France has not succeeded in getting diplomatic circles and the media to accept the legitimacy of its intervention. Worse, the latter sided with the RPF: “The media,

the diplomatic representations neighboring Rwanda, voluntarily or involuntarily, became the spokespersons for the invaders or even openly supported them,”¹⁴¹ notes Colonel Galinié. Thus, the French public radio station RFI refuses to keep silent about human rights violations, while the president of a commission of inquiry “obviously issues a certificate of good conduct to the Rwandan government, which is trying to give the best treatment to suspects, and this station only retains the negative elements of its report.”¹⁴²

Overall, the French defense attaché describes the positions of the Rwandan government without criticizing them. On the one hand, the demands addressed to President Habyarimana for better governance are described as “exorbitant and unjustified”: “The Belgians continue to maintain the confusion by brandishing the threat of a rapid departure of their nationals and paratroopers if President Habyarimana does not resign himself to exorbitant and unjustified capitulations.”¹⁴³

In addition, he warned - it was his job - that the Rwandan authorities had no intention of settling in the face of what they perceived as external aggression. They will not accept a cease-fire until they have recovered the lost territories. The threat of the physical elimination of all Tutsi is already looming. They will not be able to accept, he wrote,

*that a territorial abandonment be imposed on them for the sake of establishing a cease-fire, for the benefit of Tutsi invaders who want to regain the power lost in 1959. They can all the less accept it because the latter, not knowing the realities of Rwanda, would probably re-establish in the Northeast the despised regime of the first Tutsi kingdom that was once established there, and this avowed or disguised re-establishment would lead [added in the margin]: in all likelihood - to the physical elimination of the Tutsi, 500,000 to 700,000 people, by the Hutu, 7,000,000 individuals [...].*¹⁴⁴

Three weeks after the French intervention, the foundations of what would be the position of President Habyarimana and his entourage for the next three years were clearly stated: refusal of territorial loss, refusal of a cease-fire, threat of “physical elimination of 700,000 Tutsi,” transfer of responsibility to external aggression, and a systematic appeal for French military support.

Two days earlier, the defense attaché had already made it widely known in Paris that there was a risk of a Tutsi massacre. On 22 October, while awaiting the outcome of the negotiations in Gbadolite, the situation seemed particularly unstable. He alerted the entourage of the President of the French Republic to a possible outbreak of violence against the Tutsi of Rwanda. As proof of this, he points to the fact that a battalion has been placed in reserve in Mukamira, near Ruhengeri, the President's region, and that the camps around the city are composed of young volunteer recruits "trained under the sign of urgency (about 1,500?)." ¹⁴⁵ The hypothesis of a "massacre of Tutsi from within" would place France in front of a problem: "the request for protection on the part of Tutsi and Hutus who are favorable to them, which could be presented to France." ¹⁴⁶

The list of recipients of this message is not usual. The defense attaché transmitted it via the ambassador's number, in a diplomatic telegram to the Élysée, the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs, the General Secretariat of the government and the French embassies in Bangui and Kinshasa. ¹⁴⁷ It seemed essential, he wrote, to inform the recipients of his message so that the dangers of the situation could be assessed.

1.4 Why Rwanda

Why did France become involved in Rwanda? Although relations between the two countries are long-standing, civil and military cooperation is governed by agreements of limited scope. France's military support remains modest. However, during 1990, President Habyarimana visited the Élysée where he met President Mitterrand.

1.4.1 Agreements of limited scope

France did not discover Rwanda at the time of the October 1990 offensive. Similarly, Rwanda's desire to strengthen its economic, political and military cooperation with France goes back to the very

moment of independence in 1962.

Rwanda became formally independent from Belgium on 1 July 1962, which transferred power and withdrew its troops a month later. France, which supported the process of democratization and independence of Rwanda before the United Nations, began diplomatic relations with this country in October 1962, when Charles de Gaulle, then President of the French Republic, received President Grégoire Kayibanda. Under the impetus of the General and his counterpart head of State, these steps were formalized by a text establishing an outline of cooperation. On 20 October, 1962, France and Rwanda signed an “Agreement of friendship and cooperation” which declared the two republics “united by the bonds of constant friendship while respecting their respective sovereignty and independence.”¹⁴⁸ The two countries thus agreed to “organize close cooperation in the cultural, technical and economic fields with a view to enabling the Republic of Rwanda to pursue its development efforts.”¹⁴⁹ This desire became a reality on 4 December 1962, when three agreements came into force. The first concerns economic cooperation. The first two articles set out the framework for the relations that were established at the same time:

Article 1. The French Republic may, at the request of the Rwandan Republic, contribute to the realization of certain tasks aimed at diversifying and increasing its production, and contribute to the realization of the Rwandan Development Plan, particularly in the field of studies, infrastructure and interventions in the economic and social fields, either directly or through specialized organizations.

*Article 2. This aid may consist of sending experts or technical assistance personnel, supplying equipment or materials, carrying out works or participating in the financing of operations included in the economic and social development plan of the Rwandan Republic.*¹⁵⁰

The second agreement concerns cultural and technical cooperation, more specifically, according to Article 1, “in the fields of education, training of administrative and technical personnel, development and research.”¹⁵¹ The third agreement specifically regulates “radio cooperation” and aims to “develop, through their broadcasting, a better mutual knowledge of the

cultures of the two countries.”¹⁵² It provides for a strong involvement of the Office de coopération radiophonique, through the intervention of technicians for the production of “cultural, recreational, educational or information programs,”¹⁵³ the improvement and maintenance of the network, but also for the organization of training courses for Rwandans. This development is in line with French policy towards the former Belgian colonies, which affirms the primacy of civilian cooperation over military cooperation, which was established later.

Does this desire to move quickly reflect a desire to establish a privileged relationship? In fact, Rwanda is certainly the first territory that once belonged to Belgium to sign civilian cooperation agreements with France, but France is proceeding in a similar manner with Burundi and Zaire, even if the pace is somewhat more measured. Thus, agreements of the same nature, giving priority to civil cooperation, were signed with Burundi, which became independent the same day as Rwanda. On 11 February 1963, the two countries signed an “Agreement on Cultural and Technical Cooperation,” followed by an “Agreement on Radio Cooperation” on 5 August 1964.¹⁵⁴ The Belgian Congo, for its part, acceded to the Agreement on Cultural and Technical Cooperation. The Belgian Congo gained independence on 30 June, 1960. Before taking the name of Republic of Zaire in 1971 and until 1997, the Republic of Congo (or Congolese Republic) and France also signed a cultural and technical cooperation agreement on 17 December 1963. Thus, the forms taken by the civil cooperation between France and Rwanda, if they are characterized by their rapidity, are not different from those concerning the former Belgian colonies. The civil cooperation agreement signed with these three countries characterizes the first phase of a French policy that encompasses the regional scale.

The second phase concerns the implementation of military cooperation, not only with Rwanda, but also with its neighbors. From the end of the 1970s, President Habyarimana, who had taken power in a coup d'état on 5 July 1973, showed a pronounced interest in his French interlocutors. On 18 July 1975, he signed a special agreement on military assistance, which, however, only concerned the training and instruction of the gendarmerie, as specified in Article 1: “The Government of the French Republic shall place at the disposal of the Government

the French military personnel whose assistance it requires for the organization and instruction of the Rwandan gendarmerie.”¹⁵⁵ In addition, it “ensures, within the limits of its means, the training and further training of Rwandan Gendarmerie officers in its military schools.”¹⁵⁶ The agreement also defines the job categories of the military personnel seconded under this text:

Article 2. The military personnel [...] shall be assigned to a formation called “Bureau d’Aide Militaire,” placed under the authority of the most senior French officer in the highest rank placed at the disposal of the Rwandan Republic. This officer is the director of the French Military Technical Assistance in Rwanda and, as such, reports to the French Ambassador.

*Article 3. French military personnel placed at the disposal of the Government of the Rwandan Republic remain under French jurisdiction. These personnel shall serve under the French uniform, according to the traditional rules of employment of their arm or service, with the rank they hold. In no case may they be associated with the preparation and execution of operations of war, maintenance or restoration of order or legality.*¹⁵⁷

In short, French military personnel seconded to Rwanda are not to interfere in its internal political and military affairs. A draft amendment to this particular military assistance agreement, dated 20 April 1983, provided for the wearing of Rwandan uniforms and a specific “Military Cooperation” badge on the uniform.¹⁵⁸ It also removed the prohibitions at the end of Article 3. However, the agreement of 18 July 1975 has in fact remained unchanged on this last point:¹⁵⁹ French personnel must not under any circumstances take part in actions of war.

Finally, it should be noted that while civilian cooperation was established in barely a few months in 1962, this agreement came only after those signed with Burundi and the country that became known as Zaire in October 1971. Thus, the policy of civil and military cooperation manifested through these bilateral agreements with Rwanda is not different from that which France pursues at the regional level with the former Belgian colonies.¹⁶⁰

1.4.2 Cooperation on a modest scale

How are these agreements implemented? Was the military intervention of October 1990 due to the importance of Rwanda in France’s foreign policy in diplomatic, economic or commercial terms? Not really, even if, since the arrival of President

François Mitterrand in power in 1981, French-speaking Rwanda has become one of the countries that France particularly supports in Africa and has thus become a “country in the field.”

President Habyarimana came to power in 1973 and has a long history of relations with France. In April 1977, he went to France where he was welcomed by the authorities.¹⁶¹ Several representatives of the French State traveled to Rwanda: the Minister of Cooperation, Robert Galley, from 22 to 24 April 1979, and then the President of the French Republic, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, on 17 and 18 May 1979.¹⁶² On the occasion of the meeting with the President of the Republic, Habyarimana had a meeting with the French government. During the meeting with the French Minister for Cooperation, the President of Rwanda spoke out in favor of closer cooperation, particularly in the military field. French military credits were maintained for the period 1980 to 1982 at a level of one million francs. Robert Galley was invited by President Habyarimana to his personal residence in Kanombe, which was a first, as the French ambassador noted: “No minister had ever been personally invited by the Rwandan president until then.”¹⁶³ On this occasion, it was noted: “President Habyarimana [...] would like to become a privileged interlocutor for us, following the example of his peers in West Africa.”¹⁶⁴

Relations with France were strengthened in 1981 when François Mitterrand became President of the Republic. Between 1981 and 1982, the two heads of State met four times, notably on 7 October 1982 in Kigali. In 1983, the deputy director of Central and Eastern Africa at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote:

It can be announced to the Rwandan Minister that we intend to organize very soon regular contacts aimed at an exchange of politico-military information on the situation in Central Africa, according to the formula suggested by Mr. Hernu in June 1982 (a senior official of the SGDN is to be sent to Kigali, followed by quarterly update visits).

However, he expressed a certain caution in the face of President Habyarimana’s requests: “It would be advisable to keep a low profile in the face of any more ambitious requests.”¹⁶⁵

1.4.2.1 DISCREET MILITARY COOPERATION

During the 1980s, cooperation with Rwanda remained small-scale. After a strengthening in 1981-

1983, when France financed a North Atlas aircraft, French spending even fell slightly.

The archives of the office of the Minister of Cooperation, Edwige Avice, allow us to measure the application of the various cooperation agreements in 1990.¹⁶⁶ A memo signed by General Robert Gastaldi, for example, makes it possible to observe the evolution of cooperation between France and Rwanda until the beginning of 1990.¹⁶⁷ It is an assessment of the means implemented between 1980 and 1989 in the framework of military cooperation with Rwanda. In the preamble, the author emphasizes that France and Rwanda are bound by the special agreement on military assistance of 18 July 1975, which was not published in the *Journal Officiel*, and “the revision of which, undertaken several years ago, has still not been completed”. Apart from this point of disagreement, military cooperation with Rwanda is proceeding without notable problems.¹⁶⁸

The memo details the permanent personnel seconded in the framework of the Military Technical Assistance (AMT, *l'Assistance militaire technique*) and their integration. They were well accepted by the country's armed forces personnel “but their role as advisors was greatly hampered by the pronounced taste for secrecy shown by their interlocutors.”¹⁶⁹ There were seven officers and thirteen NCOs. The breakdown by branch of service is as follows: for the Army, there are two officers and five NCOs, for the Air Force, one officer and two NCOs, and for the Gendarmerie, three officers and five NCOs. Finally, the Central Military Bureau (BCM, *Bureau Central Militaire*), in charge of mail, is represented by one officer and one NCO. Military technical assistance to Rwanda remains discreet: “No missions have been carried out for several years. None is planned until the end of 1989.”¹⁷⁰ The cost of AMT in Rwanda is relatively low: only 11.9 million francs.¹⁷¹ The agreements also provide for the training of Rwandan military trainees in France and in inter-African schools. In 1989, 230 training courses were requested and 66 granted: although requests from Rwanda increased sharply, from 1982-1984 onwards, the number of places granted by France no longer exceeded half the number of applications.¹⁷² The cost of training in 1989 was 5 million francs.¹⁷³

1.4.2.2 THE 1980S

The decade of the 1980s was marked by an effort on the part of France towards the Rwandan armed forces, to which it offered, in particular, an aircraft for training parachutists and Milan missiles. The agreement of 18 July 1975 did not provide for the delivery of arms. However, General Gastaldi's memo contains a section devoted to the "direct aid granted to Rwanda" in terms of equipment and war materials, specifying: "A major effort was made from 1981 to 1983 to equip the Rwandan squadron." This effort continued throughout the decade, albeit at a "more modest" level.¹⁷⁴ Thus, the 1989 budget provides for support of 4 million francs for the equipment plan for the Milan missile section,¹⁷⁵ for the equipment and meeting of the Nord Atlas aircraft,¹⁷⁶ for the supply of radio equipment and the acquisition of liaison vehicles for the gendarmerie.¹⁷⁷ This budget also includes the budget for the French Military Assistance Mission (MAM) already mentioned.

It is noteworthy that the budget allocated to Rwanda is not only modest but had been steadily decreasing throughout the decade.¹⁷⁸ It is also indistinguishable from the budget allocated to other African countries, whether or not they are "in the field."¹⁷⁹ Rwanda does not seem to be a priority for France and does not receive any special treatment.

Moreover, in the mid-1980s, economic aid to Rwanda remained lower than that provided by Belgian cooperation. An assessment carried out in 1984 by Robert Puissant, then French ambassador to Rwanda, shows that this country receives "year in, year out, in the form of bilateral aid, the sum of 90 to 100 million dollars," with Belgium in first place with, the previous year, aid that "had amounted to 1.2 billion Belgian francs (the equivalent of about 20 million dollars) and that the figure would be maintained in 1984."¹⁸⁰ Belgium maintained 300 cooperants, a figure higher than that of France, estimated by the Parliamentary Information Mission at about 90, to which "one should add a dozen Volunteers of Progress."¹⁸¹ As for aid from France, it was evaluated by Robert Puissant at about 75 million francs (of which 58 million were for civilian aid and 17 million for military aid), that is, "a total of about 8 million dollars."¹⁸² In addition, the *Caisse centrale de*

coopération économique (CCCE), which is responsible for investing in development projects, is becoming increasingly involved in Rwanda. In 1988, it made nearly “123 million francs in payments and 139 million in decisions” on a number of development projects.¹⁸³ Although Belgian cooperation, in terms of volume, remains more important than French cooperation, the dynamism of the CCCE in Rwanda is undeniable, particularly with regard to agricultural projects (hydro-agricultural development of the Mutara region): “In total, the interventions of the Fund in 1990 should be close to 140 million francs.”¹⁸⁴

1.4.2.3 1990: PRESIDENT HABYARIMANA’S DEMANDS AND THE NEW CONTEXT

Relations between France and Rwanda intensified during 1990. This was marked by the La Baule summit in June 1990, which renewed relations between African countries and France. However, it was in April 1990 that the President of Rwanda opened up to his French counterpart about his difficulties.

President Habyarimana first met with President François Mitterrand during a trip to Paris on Tuesday, 15 June, 1982. The Rwandan president, worried about the pressure at his border, was looking for support. Concerned about “the return of refugees,” the vulnerability of his residence located near the airport and the need to obtain arms, he turned to France while also seeking help from Belgium, Canada and the United States. Moreover, he participated in the summit of La Baule. In November 1990, the French ambassador in Kigali recalled that in July 1990 he had made public statements in favor of the democratization of his country. In April 1990, it was military support that he came to seek.

President Habyarimana’s visit to President Mitterrand on 2 April, 1990

In anticipation of the Rwandan president’s visit to France from 2 to 5 April, 1990, the French ambassador in Kigali, Georges Martres, set out in a message the main objective of this trip for the Rwandan president: “Military affairs will be among the primary concerns of President Habyarimana during his next visit to Paris.”¹⁸⁵ Georges

Martres had succeeded Pierre Bitard, who had been in office since 1986, in September of the previous year. This was not his first post in Africa, as he had previously served as head of the Cooperation Mission in Mali (1974-1978), Niger (1978-1982), Senegal (1982-1985) and Cameroon (1985-1989).

The ambassador reported the words of the Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs, according to whom the President was “very concerned about the Rwandan refugees” whose number is estimated at between 800,000 and 1 million people, unable to return, the President maintains, because “the lack of land does not allow their repatriation to Rwanda.”¹⁸⁶ It is possible, the ambassador indicated, that the Rwandan President may argue, in the discussion, that an armed return of the refugees would be a threat to his country. This threat should not be taken too seriously, however, because “it is certainly in President Habyarimana’s interest to dramatize it somewhat in order to strengthen national unity around his person.”¹⁸⁷ On the other hand, the Rwandan president is concerned about the security of the capital’s airport, “currently very vulnerable to air intervention,”¹⁸⁸ which is close to the Kanombe camp where the presidential palace is located. Consequently, as Georges Martres continues to explain, he made several requests: the repair or replacement of the surveillance radar currently in place but broken down, the donation of a secondary radar with anti-aircraft weapons, and the replacement of the Nord Atlas offered by France in 1983 “on which the operational effectiveness of the parachute battalion depends.”¹⁸⁹ The ambassador also emphasized that other countries had been approached (Belgium, Canada and the United States), but the Rwandan president’s priority, according to him, was to obtain French aid:

*It is not surprising, under these conditions, that the Rwandans are relying on us with such insistence. They are used to saying that France is the only Western country with an African policy. In their eyes, our technical military assistance is an element of this policy, which has proven its effectiveness.*¹⁹⁰

The French can, the ambassador continues, offer support to the Rwandan gendarmerie by creating a senior officer position and preparing its re-equipment, which is being done in particular by providing radio equipment for eight of the ten groups. France also agreed to help secure the airport but refused to

replace the North Atlas. There is indeed a danger of making the Rwandan army totally dependent on French aid.¹⁹¹ At an interministerial meeting on 15 March, 1990, the French government had already agreed to offer the Rwandan president a plane for his personal use: a Falcon 50.¹⁹²

A few weeks later, on 30 April, 1990, Ambassador Martres reported on President Habyarimana's visit to France. He mentioned the various trips made by the Rwandan president to his country. The donation of the Falcon poses a problem because the cooperation agreements are exclusively concerned with the development of the country and not with the lifestyle of the Rwandan president. He also cites the creation of television in Rwanda, meetings with representatives of the French economic world and concludes by expressing surprise that "the threats of Tutsi incursion from Uganda" which are of concern to the Secretary General of the Rwandan Defense, were not mentioned:

Generally speaking, this official visit confirmed the importance that Rwanda attaches to its ties with France. This importance is undoubtedly accentuated by a period in which relations with the primary partner, Belgium, are marked by a certain nervousness [...].

Finally, it should be noted that military issues do not seem to have taken on the importance that the post anticipated during this trip, given the pressing requests made by the Secretary General of National Defense to our defense attaché. President Habyarimana did express his concern to Mr. Roland Dumas about the threat of Tutsi incursions from neighboring Uganda. But nothing has yet transpired from any allusions, in the course of private conversations, to the needs previously expressed to Mr. Jacques Pelletier regarding the surveillance and defense of the Kigali airport.¹⁹³

At this point, France was on the eve of a decisive transformation of its policy in Africa.

The Hessel Report of 1990

In 1990, Stéphane Hessel, French ambassador, submitted a report on the evaluation of French cooperation.¹⁹⁴ It was commissioned by the Prime Minister, Michel Rocard, but was not made public. The Hessel report, a number of elements of which were revealed by the press,¹⁹⁵ first of all makes a series of historical observations. It reviews thirty years of French cooperation. According to this report,

French cooperation “is characterized [...] by remnants of the decolonization period and an excessive concentration of bilateral aid on sub-Saharan Africa” but also by “the maintenance of prejudicial protectionist behaviors in certain segments of the economy.” French cooperation was not adapted to the profound economic changes that took place in the 1980s. Also deplored was “the absence of a common body for forward thinking, research and evaluation.”

The text suggests a certain number of avenues: adopting differentiated strategies “according to the current or potential degree of integration of Southern countries into the world economy,” which raises the question of the development models supported by France in Africa in comparison with other models adopted in other regions of the world, particularly in Asia. This report also calls for institutional reform of cooperation with the creation of a high council for development, composed of competent figures and chaired by an independent figure, recognized at the national and international level, appointed by the Council of Ministers for five years. It calls for increased resources in the context of the end of the Cold War. It encourages France not to neglect the Maghreb or Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, where France would have advantages to exploit. Advocating a more appropriate French strategy to support integration into globalization, a reform of governance to build a more independent organization, and finally increased resources for more numerous and more effective interventions, the Hessel Report presents a very critical vision of the institutional development relationship between France and Africa. It reveals the crisis of a very specific French institution, the Ministry of Cooperation.

The La Baule Summit, 19-20 June 1990

On the occasion of the sixteenth Franco-African summit held in La Baule, 19-21 June, 1990, President François Mitterrand gave an opening speech that sought to rebuild relations between France and African countries, particularly the so-called “field” countries. This speech aimed both to promote political reforms and to reorganize French aid: “Freedom should not be seen as a hidden enemy.

It will be your best friend.” François Mitterrand intended to link French aid “to the efforts made to move towards more freedom” and announced that from now on France would no longer make loans to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) but donations. At the same time, he announced debt relief for four sub-Saharan African countries, Cameroon, Congo, Ivory Coast and Gabon. He was also hostile to a devaluation of the CFA franc, which would certainly promote the export of African products, but would make imported foreign products more expensive. This link between political democracy and economic aid is clearly made by François Mitterrand, who states that African countries should “take the direction of democracy” in order to continue to benefit from French aid, while recognizing that Europe had taken more than two centuries to emancipate itself from all the -isms, Nazism, Fascism, Francoism, Salazarism and Stalinism.¹⁹⁶

François Mitterrand’s speech was, however, clarified and even amended by Pierre Bérégovoy, Minister of the Economy and Finance, and Jacques Pelletier in a press conference. The Minister of Economy specified that French economic aid “is not based on any political condition” but that the will to see democracy develop is “without fault.” The Minister of Cooperation stated that France “could perhaps consider giving a little more to countries that were moving towards democracy.”¹⁹⁷

Finally, François Mitterrand reaffirmed France’s role in Africa from a strategic point of view, indicating that it would fulfill its international commitments, particularly its defense agreements: “Whenever a threat arises that could undermine your independence, a threat from outside, France will be present at your side. But our role as a foreign country, even if it is a friendly one, is not to intervene in internal conflicts.”¹⁹⁸

The La Baule speech was viewed with suspicion by a number of African leaders who perceived it as a political lesson given by the French president. It caused a stir, which was quickly corrected by declarations of appeasement on the part of the French authorities. There is no question of conditionality for French aid, which would be perceived as political interference. From an economic point of view, the measures advocated include innovative aspects (debt

relief, preference for grants rather than loans to LDCs) and more conservative aspects (maintaining the CFA franc parity). In any case, France intends to change the modalities of its cooperation with LDCs - even if it means modifying its institutional system of aid and development - without giving in to the injunctions of the proponents of globalization, notably the IMF and the World Bank. The latter are in favor of strong structural adjustment in African countries and greater trade openness. France's reaffirmed desire to maintain its defense agreements with African countries is a form of reassurance of past diplomatic agreements. France wishes to maintain regional stability but also to maintain its place in Africa, which is so important for its diplomacy.

Rwanda, a serious partner for a new policy?

Was Rwanda considered in the summer of 1990 as a potential partner for a new policy? Opinions were divided. This difference of opinion was reflected in a debate that took place later, in November 1990, between the Center for Analysis and Forecasting [Centre d'analyse et de prévision] of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ambassador posted in Kigali. The former considered that "the exhaustion of Mr. Habyarimana's regime was obvious even before the events of October"¹⁹⁹ and concluded that the Rwandan head of State could in no way make a good partner, his attitude at the La Baule conference having shown "that he was certainly one of the African leaders most resistant to the wind of change that was sweeping across the subcontinent, insofar as he understood its scope and significance."

The ambassador, for his part, remembers that President Habyarimana had responded "with moderate enthusiasm" to "the call of La Baule." In July, he announced his intention to promote an "aggiornamento" in his country that would lead to a political charter and a new constitution that would not exclude a multi-party system. The deadline for completion was set at two years.

What did the French authorities know about Rwandan society and its fractures before October 1990? In fact, it was the country's great poverty and economic fragility that attracted their attention. In April 1989, for example, a memorandum presented the extreme fragility of

the Rwandan economy and the great poverty of the population. It recalls the economic cost of the collapse of coffee prices, the main export product (80% of revenues), the depreciation of the currency, and the deceleration of economic growth. Rwanda is therefore particularly indebted and “hopes [...] that the French government will undertake to alleviate the Rwandan debt contracted with the CCCE.”²⁰⁰ Diplomatic memos and telegrams written in 1989 and early 1990 are pessimistic about the economic and social situation (“the economic situation is deteriorating”) and mention “the rural exodus, pushing a population deprived of everything back to Kigali.”²⁰¹ The Gross National Product is \$250 per capita, which makes it one of the poorest countries in the world, notes Jean-Christophe Belliard, editor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in March 1990. Georges Martres, newly appointed ambassador, made an even more dramatic observation in January 1990:

*Food shortage is becoming famine in some of the countryside, where the peasants with the best land are guarding their crops day and night against the starving, who they do not hesitate to kill if they are caught stealing. Elsewhere, there are reports of parents abandoning their children to their neighbors because they are unable to feed them. In addition to this serious situation, which has been known for six months but has only been recognized for a few weeks, the government has admitted that there is a structural food shortage, as population growth has outstripped the rate of development of food production for several years.*²⁰²

The table drawn up in March 1990 by the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs (DAM) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the “economic and financial situation” stresses the considerable difficulties ahead for Rwanda. In 1989, exports covered “only 38% of imports due to the drop in coffee prices.”²⁰³ The cancellation of the public debt decided by France at the Dakar summit (24-26 May, 1989), amounting to 449 million francs in principal and 157 million francs in interest, was appreciated by Rwanda. However, at the end of 1990, Rwanda had to request assistance from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. This was the purpose of President Habyarimana’s trip to the United States in late September and early October 1990.

Rwanda’s difficulties were also political. Although President Habyarimana’s authority seemed to be consolidated at the end of 1988 - he was

re-elected with 99.98%²⁰⁴ in the presidential elections of 19 November, 1988 - the internal fractures were real. A memo written in 1989 and kept in the archives of Dominique Pin, advisor to the President of the Republic, emphasizes the “popular protests” he is facing internally as well as the hostility of refugees and the opposition in exile:

“Observers of Rwandan daily life agree that the internal conditions seem to be right for the immutable Tutsi tradition of palace revolution to play a role in renewing the country’s political life. To be continued...”²⁰⁵

1.4.3 The violence against the Tutsi in October 1990

However, it was not a palace revolution that took place in October 1990 in Kigali, but a targeted persecution of Tutsi and members of the political opposition organized by the government in power in the context of the offensive of the Rwandan People’s Army (RPA).

1.4.3.1 THE MANHUNTS IN KIGALI

On 3 October 1990, Colonel Galinié reported “arrests of suspects” and “calls for denunciation.”²⁰⁶ A few days later, Ambassador Martres mentions what must be called manhunts: “The population seems calm and participates, in its majority, in the search for invaders and their supporters, particularly in Kigali. 500 arrests are announced.”²⁰⁷ The diplomatic telegram was sent to the Élysée, Matignon, the General Secretariat of the Government, the SGDN and all the ministries concerned. The “attack on Kigali” during the night of 4 to 5 October led to an acceleration of these arrests, which were witnessed by Western diplomats.

The Rwandan government prepared language that minimizes the events. The Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs was reassuring to Georges Martres during a meeting on 10 October, while the French ambassador expressed his diplomatic concern:

The minister hopes that the governments of Western countries will help the Rwandan government to convince the press of these countries that Rwanda is striving to respect human rights. After the events of the night of October 4 to 5, panic caused outbursts. But now the

government is making every effort to ensure that suspects are “sorted” in a humane manner and transferred, if they are charged, to places where they are fed and properly housed. Journalists are allowed to visit them.

I acknowledged this statement but could only point out to the Minister that I had personal information that certain “blunders” continued to occur during searches and investigations.²⁰⁸

In his January 1991 report, the ambassador gave details of what he called “blunders” that did not yet appear in the diplomatic cables of October:

Since the first days of October and especially after the night of the 4th to the 5th, thousands of suspects were arrested, often on mere suspicion, because they belonged to the Tutsi ethnic group or to a certain social category. They were crammed into a stadium for several days without food or water before being incarcerated in the country’s various prisons. They are now waiting for a sorting commission to decide whether to release them or charge them.²⁰⁹

From 5 October onwards, however, there was a noticeable inflection in the descriptions given by the Kigali post on the events. In a series of diplomatic telegrams, Georges Martres regularly informed Paris of the extreme violence suffered by the Tutsi in Rwanda. Fearing that “this conflict would degenerate into an ethnic war” because “Rwandan officials say that the Tutsi invaders carry inscriptions on them demanding the return of the Tutsi kings ‘ramba mwami’ (Honor to the king),” the ambassador mentions that:

The arrests of suspects in Kigali alone would amount to several thousand (10,000 minimum). Interrogations are violent, people are imprisoned for several days without food or water. The population continues to denounce or preserve its tranquility and refuse the foreigner or the “monarchist.” The MRND (single party) seems to be taking control of the country outside the combat zone.²¹⁰

The ambassador interprets this violence as a reaction to the fear of seeing the “Tutsi invader” arrive in Kigali, whose rapid advance is attributed to the support of an enemy from within. It was in this context that Admiral Lanxade mentioned, in a memo dated 11 October 1990 to the President of the Republic François Mitterrand, the need “not to appear too involved in supporting the Rwandan forces if serious abuses against the population were to come to light in the

operations underway.”²¹¹

In Kigali, details began to emerge of other massacres specifically targeting Tutsi in the Mutara. On 12 October, 1990, the Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs felt the need to speak to the members of the diplomatic corps posted in Kigali, who were beginning to be disturbed by the situation. In front of all the ambassadors of the Western countries, two problems were mentioned:

*That of the killings that had taken place in Mutara, which Bizimungu explained were in fact about disguised enemy soldier corpses, hence the presence of corpses in civilian clothes. The minister admitted the figure of 500 to 600 dead. The repression in Kigali, about which increasingly disturbing news is spreading: summary executions, rapes and robberies by the Zairian army, detention in inhuman conditions (notably without food for several days), systematic beatings of all suspects.*²¹²

As far as the Mutara is concerned, the Rwandan government is trying to justify its actions. This was based on the argument that the dead were only enemy soldiers dressed in civilian clothes and killed by the army. For his interlocutors in Paris, the ambassador made the link between the president’s party and the systematized and generalized violence taking place in certain regions of the country: “The Hutu peasants organized by the MRND have intensified the search for suspected Tutsi in the hills, and massacres have been reported in the Kibilira region 20 km northwest of Gitarama. The risk of this confrontation becoming widespread, which has already been reported, thus seems to be becoming a reality.”²¹³

1.4.3.2 QUALIFYING THE ABUSES: THE WORD GENOCIDE

When and how does the term genocide appear in the reports of the French ambassador to Kigali? On 15 October, Ambassador Martres used the word when he explained that the Tutsi feared genocide. He analyzed the internal situation in Rwanda. In his eyes, the Tutsi of Rwanda were in favor of “aggression from Uganda.”²¹⁴ However, he believes that the rebellion has little hope of success because of the weak support it has among the population. On the contrary, the population, he writes, “follows the MRND, organizes itself in self-defense on the hills, and hands over the rebels and their supporters, whom they hunt down.”²¹⁵

The following sentence contains the first occurrence of the word genocide

in the diplomatic telegrams from the Kigali post. The ambassador writes that the Tutsi “finally think that genocide should be feared if the European forces (French and Belgian) withdraw too soon and do not prevent it, if only by their presence.”²¹⁶

The fear of seeing a “genocide” occur is, however, embedded in another argument: it can justify the presence, in Rwanda, of French troops who “alone could prevent it”. The ambassador, however, distances himself from the concerns relayed by Rwandans emigrating to Europe. He saw only manipulation in the many warnings that reached the Kigali post. On 24 October, 1990, he wrote as follows:

The Tutsi of the interior wish in the depths of their hearts that this armed action will succeed but recognize that in case of failure it will have only delayed the distant day when Rwanda will be able to know harmony between the races. In this context, one is forced to admit that the Western media continues to be manipulated by a Rwandan diaspora dominated by the Tutsi (as evidenced by the fact that all the anti-government communiqués from various countries that have reached this embassy are signed by members of this ethnic group).²¹⁷

In addition to the expression “harmony between the races,” which reflects the image that the ambassador has of the society where he is living, this message from Kigali transforms the accusations against the Rwandan government into a vast media conspiracy from which the embassy itself, inundated with information “manipulated by a diaspora dominated by Tutsi,” would have difficulty in defending itself.

1.4.3.3 ALERTS RECEIVED AT THE ÉLYSÉE

How does the presidency in Paris exploit this information? The diplomatic telegrams mentioned above were received by the President’s advisors, which does not mean that François Mitterrand, who put his “seen” on the documents that reached him, had read them all. Other documents testify to the diversity of the alerts that reach the presidential advisors.

A file entitled “Opponents” kept in the archives of Dominique Pin, assistant to the Africa advisor, contains an open letter dated 10 October, 1990 and addressed to President François Mitterrand, Field Marshal-President Mobutu and Wilfried Martens,

the Belgian Prime Minister.²¹⁸ The letter was written by the Rwandan community in Switzerland and the Geneva-based Committee for Human Rights and Democracy in Rwanda, and testifies to the intense communication effort made by the Tutsi community and the opponents in exile, which the ambassador in Kigali also mentioned. This open letter denounces the “mass arrests” and “summary executions” of alleged RPF supporters. It cites an article from the newspaper *Le Figaro* dated 9 October, 1990, according to which of the 3,000 people gathered at the Nyamirambo stadium in Kigali on Monday, only 1,500 remained the following day, “the others having been evacuated to unknown destinations. Knowing the methods of the current Rwandan authorities and taking into account the genocides of 1963 and 1966, there is a good chance that the unknown destinations are nothing more than mass graves.”²¹⁹ Finally, the authors question the French and Belgian military presence in Rwanda, which seems to support these atrocities:

*Your troops are assisting, if not in these massacres, at least in these arrests of people who are already dying of hunger and thirst in the sorting center that is this soccer stadium. The humanitarian character of your intervention is so selective that you allow people to be massacred under the sole pretext that they are accused, in any case abusively, of “sympathy for the rebels.” Is this the rule of law? It is rather the savage state that you support. Would it be abusive to accuse you of non-assistance to persons in danger, or even of complicity? We strongly condemn your support for the bloody regime in Kigali.*²²⁰

The text, which expresses support for the RPF and speaks of “Rwandan apartheid,” also refers to identity cards with an ethnic designation (introduced at the time of Belgian colonization in the 1930s, they mention the ethnicity of Rwandan citizens). A press release of 7 October, 1990 also denounced the military support given by the French and Belgians to the Kigali regime.

*The intervention of French and Belgian troops, insofar as it is limited to ensuring the security of their citizens, is understandable. However, the occupation of strategic points, the sending of enormous quantities of military equipment and troops do not respond to the sole humanitarian occupation. Rather, it is a military intervention to support a faltering dictatorial regime. By allowing this regime to continue, the French and Belgian governments take responsibility for the ongoing massacres of innocent populations.*²²¹

There is no “seen” affixed to the document, and there

is no indication that President Mitterrand read this open letter. On the other hand, the diplomatic telegram Kigali 542²²² that reported the violence in Mutara and Kigali as well as the involvement of President Habyarimana's party can be found in Dominique Pin's archives²²³ where it is marked "for the President to read." It is reasonable to believe that François Mitterrand was informed of the implementation of systematic violence specifically targeting the Tutsi in Rwanda in 1990.

1.4.3.4 FRENCH REACTIONS

French reactions to this climate of extreme violence and political repression were of two kinds: one-off interventions and unilateral diplomatic interventions or those carried out jointly with other countries.

The French army did not stop the massacres, whether they took place in or outside Kigali, nor the rapes and other forms of violence. It is present outside of any specific mandate with the sole official mission of protecting French nationals. International law does not authorize police operations conducted by an army on foreign territory.

Some occasional rescues

The French soldiers stationed in Kigali did, however, try to protect some Rwandans among their relatives. Colonel Galinié thus tried to obtain an improvement in the conduct of the Rwandan armed forces. In the report written in November 1990, he states that his "privileged relationship" with senior officers of the FAR enabled him to obtain, on 23 October 1990, "a solemn undertaking not to engage in the systematic massacre of captured rebels or those who surrendered, which had obviously been the case, without restraint."²²⁴ He also lists "a few of the rebels who had been captured or who had surrendered," as well as "a few examples of one-off actions"²²⁵ aimed at saving Tutsi employees of the French embassy, the Tutsi companion of a French citizen or a member of the political opposition.

On 8 October, intervention on behalf of the driver of the French Embassy, a Rwandan of Tutsi origin, who was released the same day. On 9 October, intervention on behalf of a Rwandan, employed by the head of the French civilian mission, who was released the same day. On 9 October, intervention with the

*Belgian and Rwandan armed forces, at the Remera crossroads, where a Rwandan lawyer opposed to the regime had taken refuge and who was asking for French protection [...] On 22 October, recovery from a hiding place of the Tutsi companion of a French citizen and discreet transport to the French village, safe from all investigations.*²²⁶

Colonel Galinié does not cite any other example of intervention.

Lying with aplomb

The ambassador requested an audience with President Habyarimana to express France's concern. On 13 October, 1990, he reported the meeting he had with President Habyarimana. The violence against the Tutsi was henceforth placed at the center of a series of lies, arguments and counter-arguments from which the concrete question of the protection of the population disappeared. Lying with aplomb before the ambassador, President Habyarimana blamed the rebellion for the events:

*As for the internal repercussions of the events, I myself, wrote the ambassador, took the lead by reporting the alarming news I had about the destruction of huts and the assassinations of which the Tutsi were victims in the prefecture of Gisenyi (in Kibilira and Mubororo). The president told me that the territorial authorities had put a stop to them (but immediately after our meeting I was able to verify by telephone that these incidents were continuing).*²²⁷

In a remarkable twist of argument, he makes the Tutsi the very cause of their misfortune: if the rebellion stopped, there would be no need for the repression. The ambiguous wording makes it impossible to know whether the ambassador shares this view or not:

*One may think that the rebel movement, which relies on the one hand on Tutsi émigrés and on a multi-ethnic bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, has lost the game militarily [...] Under these conditions, it might be useful to make the representatives of the rebels understand that the continuation of armed action, serves only to justify a repression that is increasingly taking on a racial character.*²²⁸

The ambassador chose to believe what his Rwandan interlocutors told him. An argument appears that will be repeated in each episode of targeted persecution against the Tutsi: the massacres are linked to popular emotions that overwhelm the local authorities, without any intervention

by the central power, which would hasten to punish the guilty once it had regained control of the situation. The ambassador wrote in his report of 8 January, 1991:

*Massacres of Tutsi were reported on October 13 in the Kibilira region, 20 km northwest of Gitarama. But even though these massacres resulted in more than 300 victims, the government authorities took control of the situation. Several administrative officials were dismissed and imprisoned. The Minister of the Interior and the Prefects clearly had control over the population.*²²⁹

The Rwandan authorities tried to reassure their interlocutors by punishing some of the perpetrators, which allowed them to assert that the authorities in Kigali were not responsible for local outbursts provoked by the emotions of the inhabitants.

*If the authorities succeeded in preventing the massacre of Tutsi, it was by taking draconian measures against the local authorities, who were threatened with eviction if they were unable to maintain public peace. Thus, the sub-prefect and the burgomaster of Kibilira were arrested after a hundred Tutsi were killed by Hutu during the week of October 7 to 13 (this killing is the only one currently recognized by Rwandan officials, who do not deny that there were a few blunders here and there).*²³⁰

The Rwandan authorities are therefore playing both sides of the fence. On the one hand, they provoke violence to consolidate their power in their own country, and on the other hand, they try to reassure their foreign partners when the need arises. The latter choose whether or not to believe them.

1.5 IN SEARCH OF SOLUTIONS

Caught in the middle of what it perceived as an ethnic conflict threatening to spiral out of control, and having become President Habyarimana's sole military supporter, France sought a negotiated solution to the crisis in early October. Acting on both fronts, it first reassured its Rwandan partner of its support. President François Mitterrand himself chose to delay the departure of one of the Noroît companies present in Rwanda. In addition, France sent a diplomatic mission to the region at the beginning of November to try to get the neighboring states involved in a negotiated solution with the RPF. It

is also trying to obtain from the Rwandan president, in exchange for French support, a significant evolution towards more democratization and respect for human rights.

1.5.1 A weakened French position (15 October-6 November)

During the month of October, Colonel Kagame, who was in training in the United States, returned to Africa and joined the Rwandan People's Army (RPA). Rebel operations resumed and the Rwandan Armed Forces were again put to the test. A cease-fire is emerging. For the French, the question arises: to leave or to stay? The decision takes shape around 25 October. It seems to have been taken at the Élysée at the direct instigation of the Rwandan president.

1.5.1.1 THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE CEASE-FIRE (26 OCTOBER 1990)

The French president's entourage was aware of the fragility of the military situation. The Rwandan Armed Forces seemed to be holding out, but "The balance of power is no less worrying, particularly if the withdrawal of Zairian forces were to be confirmed,"²³¹ writes Colonel Huchon. Indeed, the Zairian detachment, which posed problems for the security of the civilian population, returned to Zaire. Belgium was preparing to withdraw its troops, considering that the safety of foreign nationals was no longer threatened. The next day, 16 October, Colonel Huchon stated that the withdrawal of the Zairians had immediately resulted in an advance by what he called "Ugandan-Tutsi forces": "Ugandan-Tutsi forces have taken over the towns of Gabiro and Nyagatare, taking advantage of the departure of the Zairian forces [...] President Habyarimana's future depends more and more on the diplomatic and material assistance that we can give him."²³²

Violent fighting took place on 23 October. The Rwandan Armed Forces lost a Gazelle helicopter armed with rockets. However, they did not retreat any further. It was on this day that the Ugandan army major was captured, and this was the subject of an exchange of faxes between Colonel Galinié and Colonel Huchon in Paris. On 24 October, during an offensive north of Nyakayaga, the Rwandan Armed Forces took prisoners, all of whom were of Ugandan origin, as was their weaponry.

On 24 October, the RPF accepted the cease-fire negotiated in Belgium through Presidents Museveni of Uganda and Mwinyi of Burundi. The cessation of fighting paradoxically complicated the situation for the French. In Paris, Foreign Affairs and the Élysée Palace had divergent views on this cease-fire, which was considered a victory for the RPF, whose political and diplomatic existence it confirmed. Foreign Affairs was in favor of it. Dominique Pin, at the Élysée's African unit, expressed the Presidency's reservations. While Michel Lévêque, Director of African and Malagasy Affairs at the Foreign Office, proposed, on 26 October, to support an "effective and immediate cease-fire."²³³ Dominique Pin emphasized the last word and wrote: "This is hardly favorable to Rwanda. Above all, it is necessary to obtain a halt to the infiltration from Uganda. I told this to Mr. Lévêque."²³⁴ President Mitterrand made no handwritten comment other than "seen."²³⁵

President Habyarimana returned to his country on 25 October. He received the French ambassador in Kigali the same day. The Rwandan president was worried and disappointed. He was worried about the presence of Colonel Khadafi on 23 and 24 October in Kampala, because he thought that Khadafi might supply arms or support his enemies. Disappointed by the Belgian refusal to deliver arms to him, even though they had been bought and paid for. Encouraged by the victory of his troops, who owed much to the advice given by French officers to the Rwandan command, he was hostile to the cease-fire and would prefer the French to push the "rebels" out of the country for good.²³⁶

President Habyarimana renewed his requests for arms deliveries and military support. The ambassador of course refused direct involvement, but did not rule out significant support: the French military force, currently focused on protecting French nationals, could be reconfigured as a first step, and French troops not be disengaged, unlike what Zaire and Belgium had done. President Mitterrand seems to have personally promised President Habyarimana that French soldiers would remain in Kigali:

But his main concern is what our attitude will be after the eventual departure of Belgian troops. I told him that in a first phase, it would be necessary for us to redeploy our forces to continue

*to carry out our mission of protecting French nationals and our embassy. In a second phase, our government should conduct a new analysis, taking into account the evolution of the military and political situation. [...]. President Mitterrand, President Habyarimana told me, promised me that he would not abandon Rwanda.*²³⁷

France, on the other hand, needs the Rwandan president's help on one point: he must convince international opinion and the media that he is indeed the victim of an external aggression from Uganda.²³⁸ The report of the meeting between the ambassador and President Habyarimana was submitted to President Mitterrand for reading by Dominique Pin, who noted in the margin, in handwriting, "reported."²³⁹

This message raises another question that has remained little documented until now: what is the exact form that French military support takes? Were the troops of the Foreign Legion and the Marine Infantry, as well as the elements specializing in intelligence gathering on the ground, limited to ensuring the security of the French? A cease-fire supervised by an interposition force certainly poses a problem for President Habyarimana because it favors the long-term installation of the rebels on Rwandan territory by allowing their supply from Uganda. The presence of a form of interposition, the contours of which have not yet been defined, also puts the French in a delicate position, as they seem to be present not far from the border. "Our involvement in Rwanda," wrote the ambassador, "would only become more complex."²⁴⁰

This text was circulated, "for attribution," to the French embassies in Bujumbura, Dar-es-Salam, Kampala, Kinshasa, Nairobi, to the advisors for African and Malagasy Affairs as well as to the advisors of the Prime Minister in Paris.²⁴¹

1.5.1.2 TOWARD A PARTIAL WITHDRAWAL AND A DEMOCRATIC ORIENTATION

For the time being, the situation in Rwanda had stabilized. On 30 October, President Mitterrand decided to bring back to France one of the two companies present in Kigali.

A company to leave

Admiral Lanxade sent him two memos, on 29 and 30 October 1990,

in which he recommended this solution. Victory on the ground was achieved and it was possible to move on to the second stage of the maneuver: putting pressure on President Habyarimana. A company was still maintained on the ground, as the French forces in the Central African Republic were able to intervene rapidly. This was the arrangement that remained in place until June 1992.

The deputy chief of staff's arguments are essentially military in nature. On the ground, he said, Rwandan forces won a decisive victory by retaking the town of Gabiro on 27 October.²⁴² The "Ugandan-Tutsi" units fled northeast into Akagera Park. The Rwandan forces will regain control of their border. Calm, he wrote, reigned in the country. Since the Belgians were recalling their forces, France could begin to disengage, for example, by withdrawing one of the two companies on the ground.²⁴³ This would be a middle ground: "The last company could then remain in Kigali for one to two weeks until the cease-fire is effectively in place in order to reassure our nationals."²⁴⁴ The complete departure of the French forces could take place in mid-November. This would be compensated for by keeping French units in the Central African Republic on alert for some time, capable of intervening within a few hours. Handwritten comment by the Secretary General of the Élysée: "for guidance. Jean-Louis Bianco."

Putting pressure on President Habyarimana

The next day, 30 October, Admiral Lanxade placed this decision in the context of negotiations with President Habyarimana. Now that Habyarimana had won a decisive victory, he had to act on democracy and human rights: "It would be desirable that this strong position be used to improve the internal democratic dialogue, to make progress on the refugee issue, and to treat the prisoners with magnanimity."²⁴⁵ The Quai d'Orsay should send instructions to the ambassador in Kigali in this sense. The President marked "seen."

That same day, Georges Martres was asked to express to President Habyarimana France's demands for a democratic opening and, in particular, for the release of those arbitrarily arrested in October:

Please approach President Habyarimana to inform him of our assessment of the situation. You will express to him our wish to see him take the initiative on the political level. In our opinion, he should take advantage of the current situation to make known, in a solemn manner, his willingness to open up politically and to resolve the refugee issue. It would be good if this call for dialogue were accompanied by the announcement of liberal measures in favor of those captured as a result of the fighting and those still detained following the preventive arrests made in recent weeks.²⁴⁶

The ambassador reported that his efforts had met with moderate success. The Rwandan government is certainly “committed to a multiparty system” and claims to be willing to carry out reforms under pressure from French diplomacy, but it refuses to compromise on the issue of prisoners. The ambassador concluded that a French presence should be maintained, not only to stop the enemy at the borders but also to curb “harmful excesses” by the army in the interior.²⁴⁷

1.5.1.3 DIFFERENCES IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS (30 OCTOBER 1990)

Is the emerging policy in Rwanda viable? At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, two analyses clashed: that of the Ministry’s analysis center, CAP, which concluded that the Rwandan regime was not a reliable partner, and that of Ambassador Martres, who defended the idea that the existence of President Habyarimana represented the only chance for the policy of opening up towards democracy to succeed.

“The Rwandan Detonator” (26 October)

The analysis of CAP researcher Jean-François Leguil-Bayart’s “Rwandan Detonator”²⁴⁸ notes that the Habyarimana regime had run out of steam “even before the events of October.” The country was marked by growing domestic protest and the refusal to engage in a policy of openness to defuse discontent. The only response of the government is “authoritarianism” marked by the bloody repression of student demonstrations, the banning of newspapers and the intimidation of opponents in exile. The other characteristic of the country is intense social polarization:

The ethnic connotation of the latter (Hutu versus Tutsi) should not be misleading. It concerned above all the holding of political power and the appropriation of the means of production. The victory of the Hutu counter-elite in 1959-1964 resulted in appalling massacres, but also in the exodus of a large number of Tutsi refugees to neighboring countries.²⁴⁹

The analysis then turns to the refusal of the Kigali authorities to consider the return of refugees on the pretext that the country was overpopulated and that the RPF was confronted with a “thirst for legitimist revenge on the part of a Tutsi aristocracy that has learned little in thirty years of exile” and “a state of mind sometimes close to obscurantism.” In this context, the arrival in power of the RPF would result in an unleashing of terror: the terms are those that refer to the violence that accompanied the return of royalty to France in 1815: “Everything indicates that Fred Rwigyema is leading a counter-revolution, the first consequence of whose success would be the unleashing of a white terror, selective but comparable in its cruelty to the Burundian massacres of 1972.”

Jean-François Leguil-Bayart, after an analysis of the regional situation, concludes with a forward-looking assessment that history will unfortunately largely confirm. What is likely, in his eyes, is the failure of a negotiated treatment of the conflict; the fall of the Kigali government and its replacement by another team representing Hutu interests or “a more serious, but nevertheless plausible, hypothesis” by the RPF; the crystallization of a war situation on the borders of Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and even Burundi “probably just as bloody and full of dramatic reversals”; the weakening of the power of the Ugandan president and finally the deterioration of the economy and health conditions in the area:

The Franco-Belgian intervention had the merit of preventing the Rwandan Patriotic Front from seizing power and taking historical revenge on the Hutu Republic at the cost - no doubt - of terrible massacres, while limiting the repression undertaken by the beleaguered regime of General Habyarimana.²⁵⁰

So far, France has managed to accommodate both sides. However, the viability of this policy will be increasingly compromised as Rwanda becomes embroiled in war. Indeed, the French military presence “will support the arrests, executions and massacres that the government of Juvénal Habyarimana

will carry out in order to break not only the Rwandan Patriotic Front but also its potential sociological base (the Tutsi minority) and the Hutu protest.” It risks leading the French to confront RPF men, seasoned by their experience in the Ugandan army. It will irritate Tanzania, displease Burundi and “incite Mobutu to take refuge under the French umbrella.” In short, “once the evacuation of the expatriates is assured, the French intervention will only make sense if it accompanies the departure of President Habyarimana and the establishment of a government determined to enter into real negotiations with the Rwandan Patriotic Front.” Since France may have to intervene in other countries to ensure the security of its citizens, and since the bulk of its forces are mobilized in the Gulf, the report’s recommendation is unambiguous: “The hypothesis of withdrawing from Rwanda seems to prevail as soon as circumstances allow.”²⁵¹

Trusting President Habyarimana

Ambassador Martres did not share this opinion. On 15 November, he wrote a long letter, addressed directly to his minister Roland Dumas,²⁵² which took the opposite view of the analysis of the *Centre d’analyse et de prévision*. His letter - not a very usual format for communication between an ambassador and his minister - justified the choice to support President Habyarimana despite the excesses of the regime. It lists the country’s weak points and concludes that only the president is likely to maintain the country’s unity, limit human rights violations and control the Hutu clans in the north.

The domination of the northern Hutu clan and the economic crisis are certainly fueling the protests, but according to Georges Martres, the regime is not as authoritarian and indifferent to human rights as it is said to be: “The student demonstrations last summer caused only one death (*sic*) in Butare, and the prefect, as well as the commander of the local gendarmerie, were suspended as a result of this incident.”²⁵³ The press was not entirely muzzled, since “the organ of the episcopal conference was able, in the course of this year, to indulge in fairly severe criticism of the regime with impunity”. The ambassador also refuses to accept the accusation that President Habyarimana is hunting down and intimidating opponents in exile.²⁵⁴ The intense activity they show in the

media seems to him to be a sign of the opposite.

Finally, President Habyarimana has said he is willing to bring his policies into line with the spirit of the La Baule speech. Admittedly, things are progressing slowly. The ambassador recalls that in July 1990 the terms of exchange “aid for democracy and respect for human rights” were established for Rwanda. Only the pace of implementation of the reforms is a problem:

*President Habyarimana finally responded with moderate enthusiasm to the call of La Baule. In July, he announced his intention to promote an “aggiornamento” that would lead to a political charter and a new constitution that would not exclude a multiparty system. Only the time frame for completion was a bit long (two years). In short, the Rwandan head of State is not any more out of breath after 17 years in power as the most illustrious of his French-speaking colleagues, whose political longevity may seem equally astonishing.*²⁵⁵

The ambassador does not, however, deny the dangers that arise from the ethnic question. He traces its genesis and places the events of October in a past so present that reconciliation hardly seems possible:

*The armed invasion of 1 October was quickly perceived by the Hutu people as the return of this aristocratic domination, and each passing day of war or guerrilla warfare only accentuates the ancestral mistrust of the privileged caste, which remains today, after thirty years of independence, the gatekeeper of a culture, a way of life, and intellectual and technical skills superior to the national average. Old wounds have thus been rekindled, making reconciliation more difficult at a time when, in the interests of the country, it is becoming more and more necessary.*²⁵⁶

It does not even seem possible to rely on neighboring countries in a meaningful way. In fact, Rwanda risks exploding the regional balance: “Rwanda is [a] potential detonator for the whole sub-region.”

After this presentation, Ambassador Martres evokes another danger that seems to him intrinsically associated with the imbalances in Rwandan society. If the Tutsi were to seize power or if they were to be associated with it, conservative tendencies within Hutu circles would do everything to drive them out:

Shouldn't we fear today that such a conservative tendency, relying

*on the recent successes of the Rwandan army, will do everything to avoid an opening whose limits it will be difficult to set? The inferiority complex of the majority ethnic group with respect to the former feudalists remains strong. Many of the former are convinced that, with one concession after another, the latter will soon succeed in regaining their supremacy.*²⁵⁷

Only President Habyarimana can face this danger and, even if the hardening of the regime seems to indicate the contrary, “it is vain to imagine that anyone else could, better than him, advance negotiations with the Rwandan Patriotic Front.”

What can be said, under these conditions, about the French military intervention, continues the French ambassador in Kigali. “Justified by the protection of our nationals, it contributed to preventing the arrival in power of a new team which it has not been established would have been more democratic than the current team. It also helped to avoid serious ethnic clashes.”²⁵⁸

In doing so, and this is an argument that appears for the first time in the accessible documents, France sent a signal to other friendly African countries that in case of aggression from abroad they would be protected. “To accept that the fortune of arms could change the regime in Kigali from abroad would have constituted an unfortunate precedent for other African countries whose peaceful evolution towards democracy we wish to encourage and which are not safe from a similar venture”.

1.5.2 The diplomatic route (28-29 November 1990)

The month of November 1990 was marked by the exploration of diplomatic means to resolve the problem of Rwanda and to allow France to disengage after having involved neighboring countries in the resolution of the crisis.

1.5.2.1 THE STRATEGY OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

What line does the Ministry of Foreign Affairs take? It chooses not to follow the radically pessimistic observations of its analysis and forecasting service and to support the presidential policy while remaining reasonably cautious. Since the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are not very extensive and the papers of

Minister Roland Dumas are not accessible, it is in the archives of the Presidency of the Republic that two important memos are found, addressed to the Élysée by the Director of African and Malagasy Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Michel Lévêque, to the President's advisor in the last days of October 1990. This was the very moment when the military crisis at the border was being resolved and the Gbadolite summit, under the aegis of President Mobutu, whose residence it was, led to a cease-fire.

The first, dated 26 October, describes the thinking of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its title, "Aggression of Tutsi refugees from Uganda against Rwanda,"²⁵⁹ has the advantage of not placing the problems in a Tutsi versus Hutu opposition, as the ambassador and the defense attaché did under the influence of their interlocutors, but rather of placing the issue in a wider context: that of refugees in the Great Lakes region. It gambled on a diplomatic initiative in the region and clearly stated France's objectives: to prevent the overthrow of President Habyarimana, which would set the region ablaze, and to seek a peaceful resolution of the crisis through diplomatic means:

An overthrow of President Habyarimana as a result of armed action by Tutsi refugees from Uganda and supported by that country would provoke large-scale ethnic clashes in Rwanda between Hutus (90% of the population) and Tutsi (10%). There would also be a significant risk of these troubles spreading to Burundi. Finally, such a situation could lead to a regional confrontation, with Zaire being able to intervene more massively in the conflict or suffer the repercussions itself.

Given these factors, the precariousness of the situation in Rwanda (intensity of the fighting; heavy armament of the rebels; continued infiltration) and the limits of current diplomatic attempts, it seems that we have a special role to play in the search for a peaceful settlement to the current crisis.²⁶⁰

In order to clarify France's objectives to its partners, Foreign Affairs proposed sending the Minister of Cooperation on a "regional" tour. The objectives set for him are precise. The Rwandan government is expected to make progress on specific points: return of refugees - which is of primary interest to the other states in the region; dialogue with the opposition, including the outside world - which refers to the RPF; and respect for the cease-fire. The international community could

consider financial assistance for the return of refugees. In exchange, the two parties would have to agree to the establishment of an interposition force under the aegis of the Organization of African Unity (OAU).²⁶¹

In a second memo dated 27 October 1990, Foreign Affairs discussed sending a ministerial mission to the Great Lakes region. Its agenda was clear: “to construct the diplomatic conditions for maintaining the French presence in Rwanda.”²⁶²

The Director of African and Malagasy Affairs at the Quai d’Orsay then listed the partners that France wished to involve in the Rwanda issue. Firstly, the Belgian authorities, then the countries of the region, and above all the President of Zaire, who organized the summit in his residence in Gbadolite where the cease-fire was drawn up. The maintenance of French troops was presented to them as a contribution to resolving the crisis.

1.5.2.2 REGIONAL INTERESTS DIFFICULT TO UNTANGLE

Obtaining the consent of African countries to the French presence is all the more desirable since some have questioned the reasons for maintaining the French military presence. President Buyoya of Burundi considers that France [] has practiced “an external interference.”²⁶³ The ambassador met with the Burundian human rights activist Pierre Claver Mbonimpa who, he said, did not fail to question the continued presence of French soldiers in Rwanda after the withdrawal of Belgian troops. The question is of concern to both the authorities and public opinion.²⁶⁴

Optimistic instructions

For its part, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs notified the French ambassadors in Kigali and Kampala of the instructions on 30 October. After recalling the recent military successes of the FAR, Paris insisted that President Habyarimana should not take advantage of this to abandon any idea of dialogue, the return of refugees and the release of Tutsi prisoners or political opponents. As for the President of Uganda, he should refrain from arming and protecting the rebels:

It seems important that this development does not distract President Habyarimana from the goal of dialogue with the opposition

forces to resolve the refugee issue [...]

For Kigali.

Please approach President Habyarimana to inform him of our assessment of the situation. You will express to him our wish to see him take the initiative on the political level. In our opinion, he should take advantage of the current situation to make known, in a solemn manner, his willingness to open up politically and to resolve the refugee issue. It would be good if this call for dialogue were accompanied by the announcement of liberal measures in favor of those captured as a result of the fighting and those still detained following the preventive arrests made in recent weeks.

To Kampala.

You will express to President Museveni our support for the peace initiative led by the countries of the region, insisting that the negotiation has no chance of success unless the supply of arms and ammunition to the rebel elements is stopped. Furthermore, you will ask the Ugandan head of State about his intentions with regard to assailants who wish to return to Uganda following the failure of their offensive. In our view, the return of unarmed persons should not be hindered and those who are armed should be intercepted and disarmed, pending the outcome of the negotiations.²⁶⁵

This catalog of good intentions obviously belongs to the register of diplomatic exchanges. However, it shows an optimism that may seem unjustified.

The DGSE memo on Uganda

A memo from the Direction générale de la sécurité extérieure (DGSE) written on 8 November 1990 shows that the situation is not what it seems. The DGSE was not an important source of information on Rwanda before 1994. It remained on the sidelines and developed a relatively critical approach to the policy being followed. On 8 November 1990, it was asked to answer the following question: could Uganda's involvement in the actions of the Rwandan People's Army be proven, and therefore could its attacks be qualified as external aggression? The answer given to Dominique Pin at the Presidency is clear: no.

The policy of the government in Kigali has been to accuse President Museveni of deliberate attack from the outset in order to attract international support, achieve national unity and provide an explanation for his initial military setbacks. In a second phase, Libyan involvement was suggested for the same reasons and "complacently taken up" by the Europeans, with

*perhaps the ulterior motive of pushing the Ugandan president to distance himself from Colonel Gaddafi. Appearances support this theory, but there is no evidence that the rebels actually received significant aid from these two countries.*²⁶⁶

The intelligence service adds that there are certainly complicities within the Ugandan army but not with Uganda as a State. The latter was certainly aware of the preparations but warned its Rwandan counterpart three times: “It never paid any attention.”²⁶⁷ The refusal to negotiate on the refugee question came from Rwanda. According to the DGSE, President Museveni did not know the date of the offensive “otherwise he would have had every reason to oppose it, particularly at a time when he was holding the presidency of the OAU.”²⁶⁸ Finally, the absence of heavy weaponry shows the absence of the minimum logistical support that would have been sufficient to seize Kigali. As for Libya’s involvement, it was not confirmed, at least in the initial phase of the confrontation.

This analysis was sent to various institutions mentioned in the addressees, notably to the Élysée, to the Cabinet Office, the EMP and the diplomatic advisors; to Matignon, to Prime Minister Michel Rocard’s Chief of Staff and to the SGDN; to the Ministry of Defense, to the Cabinet Office, to the EMA and to the CERM; to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to the Cabinet Office and to the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs; and finally to the Ministry of Cooperation: Cabinet Office and Head of the MMC.²⁶⁹ The only copy preserved, to our knowledge, is a copy of a document that was sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, found in the archives of Dominique Pin, and it does not bear the “seen” of the President of the Republic.

1.5.2.3 THE PELLETIER-MITTERRAND TRIP (6-8 NOVEMBER)

It was in this context that in early November 1990, Jacques Pelletier, Minister of Cooperation, and Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, “Africa” advisor to the President, traveled to Rwanda and neighboring countries to meet with all the actors in the conflict and seek a diplomatic solution. They met twice with President Habyarimana, the first time on 6 November 1990, and the second on 8 November after having met, in the meantime, with the authorities of neighboring countries and representatives of the RPF. Their efforts were

moderately successful.

Reassuring the Rwandan president

Three days earlier, Georges Martres had prepared the Minister of Cooperation for what awaited him in Kigali. The French protection does not seem to encourage the Rwandan government to take the desired path. On the contrary, it mobilized its public opinion against the “invader,” both Tutsi and foreign: “The security that has largely been regained allows President Habyarimana to reinforce his authority over a population that the government and the party continue to mobilize against an invader perceived as both Tutsi and foreign.”²⁷⁰

The Minister of Cooperation did not come empty-handed, however. To President Habyarimana, who wanted to maintain and even increase the number of French paratroopers, Jacques Pelletier “indicated that such a reinforcement was not envisaged, but that they would be maintained for as long as necessary.”²⁷¹ The Rwandan head of State also wanted military cooperation to be strengthened in the areas on which the effectiveness of his army depended: high command, aviation, armored vehicles, paratroopers. It would be partially satisfied. The delegation even proposed a high-level advisor to direct the reorganization of this cooperation.²⁷²

Jacques Pelletier, Jean-Christophe Mitterrand and their delegation then left Kigali to establish contacts with the RPF and with the various authorities in neighboring countries.

Meeting with the RPF: the weight of the insult

The meeting with RPF representatives on 8 November 1990 is described in a diplomatic telegram issued by the French embassy in Kampala.²⁷³ It was conducted at the initiative of Germany, according to Pasteur Bizimungu who represented the RPF. Protais Musoni and Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa, important RPF leaders, were also present. Paul Kagame was not mentioned among the participants. The RPF representatives indicated that they agreed to dialogue with Kigali and said that they did not want to oust President Habyarimana but only to assume a share of power. However, they say they are determined to continue fighting if the Rwandan president

persists in his blockade. They agreed to the organization of a regional conference, but were dubious about its chances of success. Finally, they warned their French interlocutors about “Habyarimana’s double-talk.”²⁷⁴

According to them, when the Rwandan president speaks in French, for the use of international observers, he seems to make concessions. In reality, when he speaks in Kinyarwanda to his supporters, he develops an extremist discourse. The use of insults is notable. The RPF representatives point out that the official Rwandan radio station uses degrading terms towards them. They are referred to as “Ugandan soldiers” - which makes the confrontation a foreign war - but above all as “inyenzi”: “Thus, on the airwaves of Radio Rwanda, he persists in referring to the RPF combatants as Ugandan soldiers and gives them the sobriquet of Inyenzi, which means cockroaches in Kinyarwanda.”²⁷⁵

The presence of this passage in the minutes of a high-level diplomatic meeting leads us to pause for a moment on the question of insult. As we know, it is associated with the historical environment of war: one insults the enemy to impress him and to give oneself the courage to pursue, wound or kill him. But the assimilation to an insect or animal proceeds from the mechanisms of genocide in that it denies the other the status of human being, authorizing all transgressions. It is not insignificant that this question was raised during one of the first meetings between the RPF and a French minister.

Return to Kigali

In the wake of these talks, the French delegation returned to Kigali at the end of the day to meet President Habyarimana during a new meeting, which was reported in a new diplomatic telegram from the French embassy in Kigali that reached the Élysée.²⁷⁶ It reports the sparring between the interlocutors with all its nuances: the French Minister of Cooperation proposes, the Rwandan president evades. All the heads of State in the region, the Minister for Cooperation begins, expect the President to “move” by creating the conditions for a cease-fire followed by a real dialogue. First, he must agree to the establishment of a “group of observers at the border.” The Ugandan president finally

agrees to this and the OAU looks into the matter. A new meeting of the heads of State of the subregion could lead to the “rapid implementation of security control on the Rwandan-Ugandan border.” Second, the problem of arbitrarily arrested detainees, particularly Tutsi, must be resolved. The French minister repeats the accusation made to him by RPF representatives: the Rwandan president is using double-talk.

In this regard, neighboring heads of State insisted on the double language of President Habyarimana, who is said to have used moderate language in French, the tone of which cannot be found in the much more aggressive broadcasts of the Rwandan radio station in Kinyarwanda.²⁷⁷

A “regional conference on refugees was urgently needed, and President Mwinzi²⁷⁸ was ready to take the initiative as soon as the atmosphere was right. Germany and other European countries were willing to contribute financially.”

President Habyarimana did not like the issue to be seen in this light: he preferred to talk about aggression on his border. The minutes of the meeting show the voice of a head of State pushed into a corner by the French delegation:

Somewhat shaken by this unanimous statement, President Habyarimana resumed his usual series of arguments. Could he be assured that President Museveni would not encourage a new venture by his Rwandan NRA protégés? On the domestic front, the Rwandan government could only tighten its security apparatus in the face of the assailants who continued to wage guerrilla warfare on the borders. As for the political dialogue, President Habyarimana wanted to know who were to be his interlocutors.²⁷⁹

The French delegation gave him an immediate answer. He was to speak with the members of the RPF that they themselves had met in Kampala, including Pasteur Bizimungu. It even transmitted the terms of the future negotiations: the RPF representatives “want a direct dialogue and are not setting any preconditions for this dialogue. Their only desire seems to be to have their place in the management of their country’s affairs.”

President Habyarimana was not satisfied. Pastor Bizimungu is no stranger to him.²⁸⁰ As for the RPF, he thinks he knows better than his visitors what its aims are: “The President also fears that the rebels will ask to be integrated into the Rwandan Armed Forces, and this obviously seems unacceptable to him.” No doubt confident

that the weight of the ballot box will always give him the advantage, “he is nevertheless ready to admit that they form their own party and come to participate in the national political debate.”²⁸¹

In exchange for this proof of goodwill, the president reiterated his demands. He wanted “Colonel Galinié to remain as defense attaché and another high-ranking officer to reorganize the Rwandan army. Three other Gazelle helicopters would also be necessary for the latter, which could be paid for in instalments.”²⁸²

The message concludes with a brief assessment of the commitments made by President Habyarimana (notably the abolition of the ethnic identity card). The ambassador reviewed the achievements of the mission. The conditions for dialogue had been established, the existence of a group of observers at the border had been accepted, and the holding of a regional conference was being considered. Political openness to opponents has not been refused. Two stumbling blocks remain: the military conflict and targeted violence. If these two issues are not resolved, nothing will happen. It is not certain that the situation is not about to worsen:

*Even now, the presence of rebels at the borders continues to be exploited with intensity by the Rwandan authorities. It is aggravated by rumors that the attackers will expand the radius of their terrorist actions. The population is being called upon to increase its mobilization. The hunt for infiltrators continues in Kigali. Arrests and repression continue. One wonders whether this tension, having reached its peak, will eventually lead to a relaxation, or whether on the contrary it heralds new and serious explosions.*²⁸³

The French diplomatic mission relies heavily on the heads of State in the region to resolve the problem. It is not certain that they all want to get involved, and their agenda may be very different from what they claim. A few messages from the French ambassadors in the region give a sense of how they are approaching the issue.

Field Marshal Mobutu's mixed feelings

Jacques Pelletier and the delegation met with Field Marshal Mobutu in Zaire. The French ambassador in Kinshasa, Henri Rethoré, reported on the content of the meeting, which lasted less than an hour.²⁸⁴ The

marshal offered his services to participate in the resolution of the crisis, while emphasizing Germany's constant support for his efforts to restore peace. He was, however, highly critical of President Habyarimana, whom he agreed to receive, but whom he stressed had so far been unable to rise above the ethnic problems facing his country. Opposing "public opinion" to his advice, and comforted by his military successes, "he had not listened and had preferred to continue his bellicose declarations."²⁸⁵

President Mobutu, who seemed satisfied to see the refugees return to Rwanda, also considered that President Habyarimana's argument concerning the "lack of land" to solve the refugee problem "did not hold up." What the vast majority of them want, he says, is to have the status of Rwandan citizens. He will therefore see President Habyarimana again at the end of the week and, he says, will combine his efforts with those of his African colleagues and Germany to get him to act in the desired direction.²⁸⁶

By the end of November 1990, the situation seems to have stabilized. The cease-fire is in place; negotiations have begun at the regional level; President Habyarimana knows what is expected of him. It is time for the French intervention forces to return. France therefore prepares to withdraw its troops from Rwanda, since there is no longer any justification for their presence, while maintaining its military cooperation in its technical component. The withdrawal of troops begins to be organized, as evidenced by a memo from the EMP dated 15 November 1990.²⁸⁷

1.5.3 Staying

During December 1990, a series of partial decisions established French military forces in Rwanda on a long-term basis, without any real organized plan being discernible. President François Mitterrand chose to maintain a company in the country at the express request of his Rwandan counterpart, even though there was no real justification for this from the point of view of French interests. The head of the Military Cooperation Mission at the Ministry of Cooperation, General Varret, made an initial trip to Kigali to assess the needs on the ground. It took a personal letter to President

Habyarimana in January 1991 to remind him of his obligations with respect to democracy and human rights.

1.5.3.1 ADJUSTING THE FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE

The French military presence at the end of 1990 was based on two pillars: the intervention company, which finally remained in the country on a temporary basis, and military cooperation, which was outlined during a visit by General Varret, head of the Military Cooperation Mission.

The President himself decided that one company would remain

On 5 December 1990, François Mitterrand decides to postpone the repatriation of the last French company. It was a personal telephone meeting with President Habyarimana that convinced him. The latter, alerted by the ambassador who had come to inform him of the withdrawal of the French in mid-December, immediately called Admiral Lanxade, who informed François Mitterrand:

The Rwandan president called me this morning to tell me that the withdrawal of this company would be psychologically very detrimental, both internally and with respect to neighboring countries. He urged that this company be maintained for some time and he informed me that he wished to speak to you personally about this matter by telephone.²⁸⁸

The Chief of Staff offers President Mitterrand a way out. After all, the situation is not that stable on the border with Rwanda. It would be possible to ask the Ministry of Defense to leave its men for a while longer:

My personal assessment is that the situation is calm in the center of the country, but that the areas near the northern and eastern borders continue to be targeted by incursions of armed gangs, especially from Uganda. President Museveni has not been able to control and disarm these gangs, which use Uganda as a rear base. In this context, President Habyarimana's concern appears at least partially justified. I would like to make your directives known to the Ministry of Defense.²⁸⁹

The President of the Republic indicates his decision with a handwritten annotation: "Maintain for some time. FM."²⁹⁰

What tipped the balance, therefore, was not an analysis of the facts, nor the exploitation of information from the various institutions,

which confirmed the stabilization of the situation in Rwanda, nor the reorientation of French policy on the political and diplomatic terrain. The Rwandan president bypassed all the levels and all the intermediaries between himself and François Mitterrand, who gave in to his demands. It is known that the Minister of Defense, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, was not in favor of keeping troops in Rwanda, but there is little trace of his position available in the archives. Only once did the Chief of Staff of the Ministry of Defense indicate in a memo to the President of the Republic: "Mr. Chevènement would like to see the rapid withdrawal of at least one of our two companies stationed in Kigali."²⁹¹

The decision of the President of the Republic to maintain French troops in Rwanda was immediately reported to President Habyarimana by Georges Martres, who contacted him by telephone: "The head of State welcomed this news with great satisfaction and expressed his deep gratitude to me."²⁹² For the ambassador, the satisfaction was shared. In the face of a situation that still seems explosive to him,²⁹³ he believes that the presence of the French companies is seen as a bulwark against the spread of clashes that would endanger the stability of the country and its neighbors: "In this context, the retention of the French paratroopers has met with almost universal approval, from that of the head of State to that of the people, including the Tutsi - at least those in the interior - who did not like the arrival of our troops on 4 October but who now consider them to be a form of protection, at least a moral one."²⁹⁴

1.5.3.2 THE NON-REMUNERATED TRANSFERS MADE BY THE MILITARY COOPERATION MISSION (DECEMBER 1990)

President Mitterrand's decision to maintain significant numbers of troops in Rwanda went hand in hand with the promise of increased military cooperation. The October offensive highlighted the shortcomings of the small Rwandan army. General Varret, who had been head of the Mission militaire de coopération (MMC) at the Ministry of Cooperation since 28 October 1990, travelled to Kigali on 13 and 14 December 1990.

His meetings with Colonel Serubuga, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Rwandan army, Colonel Rusatira, Secretary General of the National Defense,

and Colonel Rwagafilita, Deputy Chief of Staff of the National Gendarmerie²⁹⁵ enabled him to gauge the gap between the way the senior officers of the Rwandan army saw their role and what the head of French military cooperation expected. In 1998, General Varret reported to the Parliamentary Information Mission on discussions with the Rwandan army chiefs that seemed to him to be outside the normal framework of an official meeting.²⁹⁶ They alerted him to the degree of anti-Tutsi violence and the disregard of the Rwandan army and gendarmerie chiefs of staff for democratic forms. There are no documents available in the archives today that match these private remarks, but if we compare them with what Ambassador Martres and Defense Attaché Galinié said at the same time about their meetings with the same interlocutors, they seem plausible. During this meeting, the Rwandan Chiefs of Staff confirmed that they wanted Colonel Galinié to remain as defense attaché and that they wanted an officer capable of reorganizing the Rwandan Armed Forces at the highest level. At the same time, they expressed their needs in terms of training courses and equipment.

General Varret was then received by President Habyarimana.²⁹⁷ He was able to confirm to him that the direct aid provided by France to Rwanda within the framework of the military cooperation agreements would be exceptionally increased in 1991. He gave a positive response to most of the requests made by the Rwandans, with the exception of the replacement of the helicopter that was shot down. The operation would exceed the available budget; the president replied that he would approach the Minister of Cooperation directly. The officer in charge of advising the Chief of Staff was Lieutenant-Colonel Canovas, who would be placed under the authority of President Habyarimana himself, Chief of the Armed Forces staff. Lieutenant-Colonel Canovas was not to stay for more than four months²⁹⁸ (he would remain in Rwanda until 1994). A helicopter pilot instructor was also to be sent to reinforce the pilot training system, whose French manager was a night flight specialist, capable of providing tactical training in day and night flight and advising the squadron commander: his presence was extended for a year, as was that of the two technical advisors in the gendarmerie. The assistance system within the Rwandan army was completed by the creation of a

technical officer position under the senior officer commanding the armored battalion.

In the area of material aid, General Varret recalled that various munitions costing 2.3 million francs had been delivered by the Military Cooperation Mission in October 1990. He announced other deliveries: spare parts for Panhard self-propelled guns (engines - clutches - various parts), specific materials needed to equip the search unit (weapons, optics, individual equipment), two night vision binoculars for helicopter pilots, and about 60 parachutes. The gendarmerie will be equipped with radio sets, law enforcement equipment and some brigade vehicles which are Renault 4L. As far as training courses are concerned, the head of the MMC proposes to study the possibility of opening, under the sign of emergency, two places for helicopter pilots reserved in Germany. This contribution, which was significant for an army of modest size like Rwanda's, opened the door to a misunderstanding. The Rwandan Armed Forces interpreted it as a sign of unconditional support, even approval of their action. The message from the Kigali post states: "The Rwandan Armed Forces as a whole interpreted it," writes General Varret, "as a sign of interest in their country at a time when it is experiencing serious events."²⁹⁹

A significant pattern - that persisted - in Franco-Rwandan relations emerged after François Mitterrand's decision to keep troops in Rwanda. President Habyarimana and the chiefs of staff first understood that addressing the highest echelon made it possible to bypass the intermediaries and their reluctance. The Rwandan authorities interpreted this presidential support as an opportunity to ask for more and more resources. In December 1990, the requests no longer concerned air support or direct intervention by troops in contact with the RPF, which was no longer appropriate. The Rwandans seemed to have taken note of the fact that France would not be taking this step in the immediate future. On the other hand, they managed to integrate French technical assistance into their armed forces and gendarmerie at almost every level.

1.5.3.3 AN UNSTABLE SITUATION

By the end of 1990, there was no shortage of warning signs that the situation in Rwanda was unstable. The annual report of Ambassador George Martres multiplied the warnings.

The ethnic divide as a central fact

One of his warnings concerns the intense propaganda against the Tutsi that has been going on for several months, which seems to him to have become, at the end of 1990, a major characteristic of Rwandan society. Social and ethnic tensions were certainly aggravated by a dramatic economic situation.³⁰⁰ However, the racist discourse against the Tutsi, which was generalized by State propaganda, was indeed used by the Rwandan authorities to rally the population behind them and to prevent any negotiation with the RPF under the pretext that the population would not accept it.

The ambassador nonetheless struggles to identify the real reason for this upsurge. It is the “October war” that he says has caused “the aggravation of ethnic tensions.”³⁰¹ It is the pressure exerted by the RPF which, even if it does not threaten Kigali immediately, “exacerbates the most extremist feelings in the Hutu ethnic group.” President Habyarimana, under these conditions, can deplore a fracture within his country, the real causes of which he pretends not to see. The ambassador recounts: “The President and Mrs. Habyarimana opened up about this problem to the Ambassador and his wife during a private meeting on 9 December. They are wondering how relations between the Tutsi and the Hutu will be able to return to normal and trusting after the events that Rwanda is experiencing.”³⁰²

Deeply concerned about the campaign against the Tutsi, on 17 December 1990 the ambassador transmitted to Paris the information concerning the publication of the manifesto of the Ten Hutu Commandments by the newspaper *Kangura*, “the organ of the most intransigent Hutu ideology.”³⁰³ Summarizing the text, he emphasized that this publication was representative of the racist hatred that was spreading not only within Rwandan society, but also within the army:

This racist language, reminiscent of the worst anathemas of Nazi anti-Semitism, is finding an increasingly sympathetic audience as

*young recruits are killed on the country's northern front. While it shocked the conscience of many cadres and intellectuals, it received the almost unanimous approval of the army, which was largely made up of Hutus from the prefectures of Rubengeri and Gisenyi.*³⁰⁴

Justifying the French military presence

How, then, could the French presence be justified when the Rwandan military's intentions towards the Tutsi were becoming increasingly clear? The ambassador notes that French military assistance "is taking on a meaning that is further and further removed from its initial reason" because the security of French nationals is no longer threatened.³⁰⁵ His conclusions, however, do not point in the direction of a departure. It is true that the French troops are de facto preserving President Habyarimana's power, but they also represent, in his eyes, the best way to ward off the risk of violence spreading to the whole of Rwanda³⁰⁶ and as such are a stabilizing factor for the entire region.

The authorities in Kigali seem to see it above all as protection. They do not miss an opportunity to denounce the aggression they feel they are subjected to and which, in their eyes, is enough to legitimize the aid they receive. The many incidents at the border are opportunities for them to reiterate their position. Thus, on 13 December in connection with a night attack on a customs post, they denounced foreign aggression from Uganda. The Rwandan authorities seem to be engaging in a veritable blackmail of civil war. The Secretary General of the Rwandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs called a meeting of the diplomatic corps. The ambassador took up his argument, although it was not clear to what extent he was making it his own. Referring to Uganda without naming it, he wrote:

*It is clear that a foreign power that regularly supplies the rebellion with ammunition and arms in such a way as to keep the country under tension would be sure, within a few months to a year, to produce both the economic and financial collapse of the country and serious ethnic and social unrest that could reverberate throughout the sub-region. If this were the case, the Rwandan problem would take on a new dimension.*³⁰⁷

The maintenance of French troops can, however, be approached differently. The United States, for example, is giving friendly advice to its French counterparts to withdraw while there is still time, considering that France would be better off taking an interest in the RPF.³⁰⁸

President Mitterrand writes to President Habyarimana (10 January 1991)

President François Mitterrand chose to remind President Habyarimana of the terms of the exchange. On 10 January 1991, he wrote a letter to President Habyarimana in which he reminded him of what France expected from Rwanda, particularly in terms of diplomacy. The departure of the French intervention company was again postponed. The Rwandan president can feel safe under the protection of French paratroopers. He personally phoned François Mitterrand to make sure that the company would not be withdrawn.

The letter also represents the diplomatic aspect of French policy in Rwanda. Solidly argued, it was certainly written by an advisor or the services of a ministry, but it was judged that only François Mitterrand's signature would have an effect on his interlocutor. The president focused his remarks - which followed a telephone conversation - on the diplomatic aspects of the situation. France, he said, had invested in sending its Minister of Cooperation on a "goodwill mission to the region." It agrees to support President Habyarimana's point of view by reminding the Ugandan president that he should stop arming and protecting RPF men. In exchange, it expects the Rwandan president to agree to direct talks with the RPF and to consider the return of refugees, the latter in a regional context that gives the Rwandan president some leeway.

The end of the letter is clear on the terms of the exchange: it is because President Habyarimana has told him personally that he has begun to implement a policy of openness and that he is preparing a conference on refugees that the paratrooper company will remain in Kigali.

Mr. President,

As I reminded you during our last telephone meeting, I have been closely following the developments in Rwanda since 1 October. I am indeed deeply concerned about the harmful consequences for peace in the region with the continuation of destabilizing military actions, which occurred recently in Rubengeri. In the ordeal your country is going through, I would like to assure you once again of

France's support.

My country has spared no effort to find a peaceful solution. With this in mind, at the beginning of November I sent my Minister for Cooperation, Mr. Pelletier, on a goodwill mission to your country and to the neighboring states concerned by the problem of Rwandan refugees. As he explained to you and as I told you myself, this conflict can only find a lasting solution through a negotiated settlement and general consultation in a spirit of dialogue and openness (emphasis added).

In this respect, it seems to be that three conditions (idem) must be fulfilled: the non-intervention of neighboring states (idem) in direct or indirect support of actions directed against Rwanda; the opening of a direct dialogue with all the components of the nation (underlined) in a spirit of reconciliation and the advent of a state of law respectful of human rights (idem); the quickest possible resolution of the refugee question (underlined) thanks in particular to the holding of a regional conference on this subject, under the auspices of the OAU, with the participation of all the states concerned and the UNHCR.

Sensitive to the arguments that you have put forward, I have decided, in this period of implementation of the policy of openness that you have announced and of preparation of the conference on refugees, to maintain temporarily and for a period of time linked to developments in the situation (underlined) the French military company (idem) sent last October to Kigali and charged with ensuring the security and protection of French nationals.

I wish you success in your efforts to promote democracy and the return to peace.

Please accept, Mr. President, the assurances of my highest esteem and sincere regards [handwritten addition] and of my friendly souvenir.³⁰⁹

The way France chose to make Rwanda in 1990 the model for the application of the principles laid out in the June 1990 La Baule speech poses two main problems in terms of decision-making and the ability to change policy if it proves dangerous.

The decision to send two paratrooper companies to Kigali on 4 October, 1990 was taken by President François Mitterrand in his role as head of the armed forces, and the implementation was entrusted to his Chief of Staff. There is nothing irregular about this. Nevertheless, the decision had to be justified *a posteriori* by the advisors to the Presidency. They sought to give content to the notion of external aggression, which alone could truly justify French intervention.

In the months that followed, it was after a telephone call from President Habyarimana that the decision to keep first two and then one company on the ground was taken, on two occasions, by President François Mitterrand in person. These telephone meetings were prepared by the cabinets and advisors: despite the existence of a proven personal relationship, the decisions were taken in a formal manner. Nevertheless, the decision to maintain the troops was taken even though the Minister of Defense was opposed to it and the President's Chief of Staff suggested that they could be repatriated.

These choices were, in fact, carefully considered. The decision to provide military support to the Rwandan president and to protect his regime *de facto* - the French authorities are perfectly aware of this - is part of France's new policy in Africa: to give priority to helping countries that are committed to the democratization of their institutions and the defense of human rights. Between October and December 1990, the terms of the exchange were communicated several times to President Habyarimana. The French demands are of two kinds. The Rwandan president committed himself to changing the constitution, creating a multiparty system and organizing elections. The process should be accelerated. On the other hand, he is expected to commit to a negotiated resolution of the conflict by agreeing to deal directly with the RPF.

In exchange, France agrees to protect his regime. By mid-October, it was well known in Paris that it was no longer just a matter of protecting French nationals, but that the presence of elite French troops in Rwanda, even in small numbers, would stabilize President Habyarimana's regime. Paris considered that this gave it the opportunity to negotiate and the ambassador asserted that this prevented the generalization of targeted abuses against the Tutsi.

However, it soon became clear that Rwanda was not a reliable partner. Far from ensuring respect for human rights, the Rwandan authorities used the border conflict to lay the groundwork for targeted persecution against Tutsi and Hutu opponents. On the diplomatic front, it is proceeding slowly. In terms of democratic institutions, no progress is discernible. On the diplomatic level, France gradually lost its means of pressure on

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the Rwandan regime by granting most of the requests made by President Habyarimana.

In Paris, voices were raised to say that the choices made in Rwanda were not the right ones. The Minister of Defense was hostile to the maintenance of French forces in the country. The EMP is reluctant. The analyses of the prospective services of the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs identify the risks of this policy. France's American allies warn it. However, at the very beginning of 1991, France decides to continue in the direction it has chosen.³¹⁰

Chapter 2

France's Response to the Successive Rwandan Crises (1991-1992)

On 25 January 1991, an organized and systematic massacre was perpetrated against the Bagogwe, Tutsi herders living in the prefectures of Ruhengeri and Gisenyi. The day before, RPF forces had entered Ruhengeri to free the Tutsi and RPF prisoners who were being held there. During the ensuing clashes, the weakness of the Rwandan Armed Forces once again prompted French military intervention.

The above sequence of events should have highlighted to the French authorities the systemic nature of the persecution of the Tutsi and led them to question their choice to support the regime of President Habyarimana. This was not the case.

The conditions under which French policy on Rwanda was formulated in early 1991 are somewhat difficult to determine because the archives of the Elysée Palace advisors are limited for this period. On the other hand, the wealth of military sources and the large number of diplomatic telegrams allow us to understand, through the messages of the ambassador and his defense attaché, the establishment of the French military presence in Rwanda in 1991 and 1992. It is also possible to follow the political and military crisis that followed the installation of the new Rwandan government in April 1992, as well as the progress of negotiations with the RPF.

The first significant point of the period is the establishment of a French military system characterized by a close proximity between the Rwandan Armed Forces and the French units in charge of their training or the protection of expatriates. The military crisis of June and July 1992 (collapse of the FAR, attack by the RPF) led to an examination of the form of French military involvement, which came close

to direct involvement against the RPF. One may also wonder about the unusual nature of the relationship between the private staff of the President of the Republic and military cooperation in Rwanda.

The second key point of the period is the evolution towards forms of political democracy in Rwanda. The arrival in power in April 1992 of an opposition government offered France a political alternative to its unconditional support for President Habyarimana, which it was unable to seize.

The third characteristic of these two years is that France sought all diplomatic means to advance negotiations between the Rwandan government and the RPF (regional mediation, the Dar-es-Salam conference on refugees, and direct meetings), and that after the reluctance shown in 1991 by President Habyarimana in this area, the new government began a true round of negotiations in Arusha the following year.

2.1 TO LEAVE OR TO STAY? A FRENCH DILEMMA (1991)

The year 1991 began with the reflections of the end of the previous year, all of which pointed to the foreseeable difficulty for France to maintain significant military elements in Rwanda within the framework of Operation *Noroît*. Staying was already understood as providing not only military but also decisive political support to President Habyarimana, whose personal actions, according to various French administrations, had built the current situation, its tensions and crises, over the long term. Leaving also sends a powerful signal of criticism of the one who has just been helped. Leaving would weaken the Rwandan position, which the French still perceive as threatened by the RPF and, with it, by Uganda and the Anglo-Saxon world.

From the beginning of the year, the occurrence of very strong tension between the RPF and the Rwandan army led François Mitterrand to choose not to withdraw the last paratroop company, but instead to organize its replacement by new French elements. In fact, the RPF multiplied its offensives: the 23 January attack, the 5-7 February attack, a war of skirmishes and harassment in April-May, and the June offensive.

2.1.1 The crisis of 23 January 1991

At the beginning of 1991, the Chief of Staff of the French Army (CEMAT), General Schmitt, clearly analyzed France's position in Rwanda:

The return to calm in most of the country made it possible, at the end of November, to proceed with an initial reduction of the force. Since then, despite the continuing clashes at the border between Rwanda and Uganda, calm has been restored inside the country and the safety of our nationals no longer seems to be threatened.

In addition, as of January, the reinforcement of the military cooperation mission will enable it to carry out the technical military assistance mission alone.

Under these conditions, the presence of our troops no longer seems essential to me, and I would like to see them return to France to reconstitute our intervention reserves, which have been greatly diminished by the recent reinforcement of the Daguet system.

This is why I have the honor of asking you to authorize the withdrawal of the remaining unit, i.e. approximately 160 men, and the dismantling of Operation Noroît.¹

In accordance with the note of 22 November 1990,² the withdrawal of French forces from Rwanda was necessary. The general added, with the obvious aim of removing all obstacles, that a company was pre-positioned in the Central African Republic if it needed to evacuate French nationals in an emergency. Reinforcing the request of the Chief of Staff the next day, military intelligence pointed out that the maintenance of French soldiers on the ground was seen as responding more to a Rwandan request than to a French need: "In fact, President Habyarimana considered that a European military presence was likely to provide him with stabilizing support. It is possible that this view is shared by several other heads of State in French-speaking Africa."³

On the same day, 2 January, Admiral Lanxade provided President Mitterrand with an update on the situation in which he seemed to echo the analyses of the Chief of Staff of the Army and Intelligence, maintaining that it was no longer necessary to maintain a company, even if the fear of Ugandan support for the Rwandan Patriotic Front remained strong.⁴ He did, however, point out that "it might seem desirable that a letter from you be sent to President Habyarimana to assure him of your support, despite the withdrawal of our forces."⁵

While the strategic issues highlighted by the Chief of Staff of the Army are related to France's overall military capabilities in the international context, the Chief of Staff reminds us of the regional context, taking up the prospect of a threat from "Tutsi forces" allied with neighboring Uganda. This argument had an effect, since the president commented in a handwritten note in the margin: "Yes, but I would consider favorably the postponement of the departure of the Cie stationed in Kigali. At least by one month. FM."⁶

The RPF attack of 23 January, 1991, put an end to any debate about the French presence in Rwanda. The general staff immediately ordered the *Noroît* detachment to move to Ruhengeri to ensure the safety of French nationals on the ground.⁷ The message was particularly clear on the conditions of engagement of the French detachment: "Under no circumstances should our troops intervene in the fighting. Operations to maintain or re-establish law and order are the exclusive responsibility of the Rwandan army."⁸ The operation was a success and led to a message of congratulations in return.⁹

On 23 January, Admiral Lanxade alerted the President again.¹⁰ His memo was entitled "Rwanda, Tutsi offensive." In keeping with the title, he developed the idea of a "new Tutsi offensive." He emphasizes the English-speaking nature of the combatants.¹¹ However, it suggests caution and mentions the Rwandan president's desire to have direct contact with the French president: "President Habyarimana wishes to reach you by telephone as soon as possible."¹² The same day, another memo kept the President informed hour by hour of the situation in northern Rwanda.¹³ The next day, Admiral Lanxade gave an update on the situation in which he insisted on the success of the evacuations in Ruhengeri and announced another in Gisenyi: "Because of the isolation of this town and the threats weighing on this region. About fifty nationals are concerned by this measure. seen Mitterrand and JLB."¹⁴

The same day, another memo told President Mitterrand about the situation of French nationals in Kibuye and Gisenyi, not far from the northern border.¹⁵ The next day, 24 January, military intelligence sensed that something was at stake for the Rwandan president: "Its capture by the rebels, even if provisional, would have a considerable impact since it is considered to be the stronghold of President Habyarimana, who was born nearby."¹⁶

France does provide military support, but Rwanda has other economic and financial needs to deal with the difficult situation.

2.1.2 The economic and financial situation in Rwanda, February-March 1991: the other form of French support

On 9 March, 1991, the Ministry of Cooperation, through a diplomatic cable classified as confidential defense, reported that France was providing aid to Rwanda. This diplomatic telegram mentions a letter signed by Messrs. Bérégovoy and Pelletier to President Habyarimana, dated 21 January, 1991, which “assured you of France’s assistance in carrying out your structural adjustment program.”¹⁷ This so-called “exceptional” balance of payments assistance is “in the amount of seventy million francs.” The announcement will be made publicly at the “next meeting of donors in Paris on 18 March.” It is specified, however, and somewhat surprisingly, that due to “the temporary unavailability of certain experts, the financial mission of the French Treasury, the Ministry of Cooperation and Development and the Central Economic Cooperation Fund (CCCE), responsible for defining the allocations of this exceptional aid, will not be able to go to Rwanda until the beginning of the second quarter of 1991.”

Direct aid from France to a State to make up for its balance of payments deficit is rare. It is usually accompanied by a structural adjustment plan, defined beforehand and which, according to the recommendations of the IMF and the World Bank, generally focuses on reducing government spending. This is not the case here. The explanation may be found in the DGSE intelligence memo of 22 February, 1991, two weeks earlier.¹⁸ Indeed, this memo reports the words of “senior Rwandan officials” according to whom “the financial situation of the country has reached a critical threshold due to the continuous deterioration of the economy aggravated by the war against the RPF since October 1990.” The memo adds that “the war effort has absorbed almost all the financial resources available to the Treasury.” The consequences of this deficit are significant, since “the 1990 fiscal year

ended with unpaid debts of 6.1 billion FRW, which could not be settled in 1991 by advances from the National Bank of Rwanda and the subscription of Treasury bills.” This means that the Rwandan State may quickly be in at least partial default vis-à-vis a number of creditors, particularly foreign countries. As a result, the Rwandan government intends to turn to its foreign partners: “The amount of aid it is preparing to request should include, in addition to 6.1 billion arrears [of Rwandan francs], the urgent equipment needs of the Ministry of National Defense.”

According to the 1991 exchange rate tables, 6.1 billion Rwandan francs are equivalent to 70-77 million French francs. The link between the waging war and the growing deficit in Rwanda’s finances is revealed by two clues. First, Antoine Anfré, the redactor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in charge of Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire and Tanzania from the spring of 1991 onwards, notes that “in financial terms, French aid of 70 million French francs helped to improve the balance of payments, which had been permanently unbalanced due to large-scale arms purchases abroad.”¹⁹ On the other hand, the commercial attaché in Rwanda and Burundi, in his report for 1991, points out the state of “economic recession induced” by the war. Imports, he said, “tended to fall (very sharply, even if one disregards arms and munitions) compared to 1990.” However, the most interesting point is the study of the balance of payments, using figures provided by the Rwandan government: “Supply goods increased from 34.6 per cent (in 1990) to 42.2 per cent (in 1991), thanks mainly to the item ‘other supply goods’, which increased from 4.3 per cent to 18.2 per cent, which probably includes munitions. Total of “other supply goods, 6,517.7 million CAF FRW.”²⁰

What the French commercial attaché suspects is that the amount of imports, not clearly defined, under the heading of “other supply goods,” was in the amount of 60 to 70 million francs, and that this probably includes ammunition.

While it is not explicitly possible to indicate that France was able to release 60 million francs quickly for the purchase of arms

or ammunition for the Rwandan State, it is certain that the French State saved the Rwandan State from at least partial bankruptcy and that, on the other hand, the arrival of French funds was concomitant with the very likely purchase of arms abroad. This may be a case of diverted aid for the purchase of arms in a foreign country. Finally, the exceptional procedure for releasing the funds, under the signature of the Ministers of Cooperation and Economy and without prior consultation of the administrations concerned - the Central Fund for Economic Cooperation, in particular - clearly indicates that the political authorities threw all their weight behind this exceptional aid. It should be noted that while the experts from the Caisse de Coopération (CCCE), the Ministry of Cooperation, and the Treasury were unable to go on a mission to Rwanda in the second quarter of 1991, Philippe Jurgensen was in Burundi and could be in Rwanda at that time. In fact, according to a diplomatic telegram from the French Embassy in Bujumbura, "Mr. Jurgensen, Director General of the CCCE, has just made his first official trip to Burundi from 13 to 15 March."²¹ What is happening in Rwanda is not unique.

The minutes of the Africa meetings held at the Élysée Palace during the first ten months of 1991 indicate that the countries known as "the field" were experiencing a series of deep crises. Half a dozen countries were particularly scrutinized by officials from the various ministries as well as representatives from the Élysée and Matignon. These were Madagascar, Togo, the Central African Republic, Djibouti, Chad, Zaire and Congo.

In Chad, the situation is particularly scrutinized. France considers this State strategic, where it had fought Libyan forces. The question of the bloated Chadian army is raised. "The restructuring of the army, which is absolutely necessary ("unregulated recruitments" continue), cannot be carried out directly by French cooperants, who cannot assume responsibility for dismissals that could provoke violent reactions. "The simple financing of these operations exceeds the current means of our military cooperation," was noted at the meeting of 20 March 1991. However, France is changing its position on this point. General Varret, head of the Military Cooperation Mission, went on a mission to Chad

to reorganize the Chadian army. A plan was drawn up “by the Ministry of Cooperation to help the Chadian army restructure itself by paying a severance package to soldiers.” The plan includes “layoffs, provides for an effort of 30 million francs; the restructuring of the army depends on the country’s stability. There are approximately 46,000 men in the army. President Déby’s objective is to reduce them to 25,000 soldiers by the end of 1992 and to create a new army with a strong gendarmerie” [meeting of 26 June 1991].

Several States are experiencing extremely deep socio-economic and political crises. The situation in Togo is worrying: “Control of the capital and perhaps of all of Togo could at any moment escape the head of State [President Eyadema] and his government. Social discontent and political demands now seem to be joined by the revolt of the Ewe ethnic group” [Africa meeting, 18 April 1991]. The “democratization process put in place in Gabon by President Bongo” is given as an example that President Eyadema could learn from. In Madagascar, the situation was particularly critical in July and August 1991. The case of this country was mentioned at the Africa meeting of 28 August, 1991: “A president [Ratsiraka] now reclusive in his palace, deeply discredited since the massacre of 10 August, and whose reactions are unpredictable, two rival governments, one claiming constitutional legality, the other popular legitimacy [...] Nervously tried and tested, fearing for his life, President Ratsiraka is prey to cyclothymic fits of anxiety. While ruling out the idea of a departure, he seeks to gain time. To do this, he has, at the risk of triggering ethnic clashes, pushed his supporters to engage in the creation of federated states in five of the country’s six provinces” [Africa meeting minutes, 28 August 1991]. In the Central African Republic, “General Kolingba’s regime is no longer able to contain the discontent. Our presence at his side is beginning to be seriously questioned. It is important to send a very clear message to the head of State so that he will urgently designate a new government open to the concerns of public opinion” [Africa meeting, 7 August 1991]. In these three states, France fears the fall of the governments in place.

The situation in Djibouti is also worrying for other

reasons. Following an influx of “Ethiopian civilian and military refugees fleeing their country,” this State and France fear a risk of destabilization. According to France’s decision, “800 men of the 2nd RIMa, from the Gulf, were made available to the command of the French forces” [Africa meeting, 31 May 1991]. Finally, on 11 July 1991, the situation in Zaire and the Congo was discussed. “The economic and financial situation in Zaire is disastrous.”[21*b*] The situation in the Congo is judged “very worrying.” The Rwandan crisis is thus part of a larger set of crises, with multifaceted causes, that affect a number of African states and societies. In the post-Cold War and post-La Baule discourse context, they are a source of deep concern for French officials.

2.1.3 French attempts to change its support for Rwanda

On 3 February, a memo from the Élysée summarizes the situation of what was described as the “Ugandan-Tutsi offensive.”²² It contains all the elements that would remain the basic elements of French military policy in Rwanda until the end of 1993: the feeling of responding to an aggression for taking a “territorial pledge”; the provision of military assistance; the desire for a certain discretion; insertion into the regional diplomatic game; and bargaining with President Habyarimana. France provides military support in exchange for democratization, the contours of which it defines, and including the issue of resolving the refugee problem.²³ Three courses of action appear to the redactor:

The relief of the Kigali company. It was planned to leave it until February 15. Its definitive withdrawal is difficult to envisage, but a relief should technically take place at that time.

A deliberately visible overflight of the sensitive regions of Rwanda by our fighter planes from our bases in Central Africa.

These decisions would provide definite assistance to President Habyarimana and would remove any ambiguity, if any, with respect to President Museveni.

However, they carry the risk of being interpreted by the Rwandan authorities as unconditional support for their policy. If such decisions were to receive your approval, it would be important for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to assess the best time, diplomatically speaking, to implement them.²⁴

Possible problematic readings of France’s actions by the Rwandan leadership are well identified as risks. The President agrees

to all the suggestions in this note, which was brought to his attention by the Secretary General: Handwritten comment: "Seen. Yes FM."²⁵

Shortly afterwards, from 5 to 7 February 1991, a second offensive was carried out by the RPF towards the town of Ruhengeri in northern Rwanda. This offensive did not directly threaten the government of Juvénal Habyarimana, as Colonel Fruchard, a member of Pierre Joxe's cabinet, indicated in a memo addressed to the minister.²⁶ This offensive was not aimed at a decisive victory and the author noted that "the RPF does not seem capable of more significant military action."²⁷ This series of attacks was part of the negotiations on refugees in Dar-es-Salam.²⁸ The challenge for France is therefore to prevent the Kigali government from entering this conference weakened militarily and politically. Conversely, it was necessary to prevent the RPF from taking advantage of a military victory, even a symbolic one, to strengthen its international legitimacy through the acquisition of even a small amount of territory.

On 5 February, 1991, Admiral Lanxade sent a note to François Nicoulaud, director of the civilian and military cabinet of the Minister of Defense: "In view of the persistence of the threats hanging over Rwanda, the President of the Republic has decided to extend the French military presence there."²⁹ François Mitterrand's support for his Rwandan counterpart was unwavering and was well emphasized by the Ministry of Defense. Thus, Colonel Fruchard wrote: "The President of the Republic has clearly taken a position in favor of supporting President Habyarimana."³⁰ The next day, Jean-René Gehan, in charge of African issues at the Ministry of Defense, wrote the same thing,³¹ pointing out that "through this means [Noroît], it is clear that we were providing very significant support to the Rwandan regime."³² The next day, in a new memo, he repeated this analysis.³³ On 5 February, 1991, it was the military cabinet of the Minister of Defense that was presented as being at the initiative of these proposals "which, in all likelihood, reflect a prior consultation with the private staff of the President of the Republic."³⁴ The next day, the same author wrote *a contrario*: "The resumption of unrest (a new attack took place this weekend) and the requests of President Habyarimana (*sic*) led the private staff of the presidency of the Republic in liaison with the military cabinet to suggest the following measures [...]."³⁵

This version, according to which the Élysée and the EMP were the initiators, is more consistent with the information that emerges from the presidential fonds, in which the Africa unit and the EMP appear to be in charge, and also with the fact that direct contacts were established, often by telephone, between Juvénal Habyarimana and François Mitterrand. It is confirmed by the mention of a meeting held by the Africa unit on 6 February, 1991, where “the central issue discussed was the Rwandan affair and the measures to be taken by France.”³⁶

In any case, the first measures are political and diplomatic. They take the form of a trip by Jacques Pelletier, Minister for Cooperation, to Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania in February. In Rwanda, the Minister of Cooperation’s objective is to “encourage President Habyarimana to initiate a policy of openness both internally (democratization, human rights) and towards the RPF rebels [...] as a sine qua non for increased support from France.”³⁷ Jean-René Gehan confirms this objective by indicating that Jacques Pelletier would “deliver a letter from the President of the Republic setting out as a condition of our military support measures of political openness and [an] acceptance of dialogue with the RPF rebels. At the same time, steps will be taken with Kampala and the RPF so that they accept the opening of negotiations with the Rwandan authorities.”³⁸

The second measures are military. In addition to maintaining a company to support the Rwandan regime, the strategy is based on sending a detachment of about thirty men to “supervise the Rwandan troops based in the threatened towns in the north of Rwanda, so as to allow the return of the French and foreign cooperants”³⁹ who had been evacuated. There is also talk of “making deterrent flights of F1Cs and F1CRs based in the CAR near the Rwandan border.”⁴⁰ These are two types of Mirage fighter aircraft. These proposals are endorsed by the head of State: “The President of the Republic has given his agreement in principle to these three proposals.”⁴¹ The extension of the presence of a French unit in Kigali through the planned rotation of the 8th RPIMa, even if it “should not take place before Mr. Pelletier’s trip” to Rwanda, is assumed as “a first signal of our continued support”⁴² by the

military cabinet of the Minister of Defense. Colonel Fruchard nevertheless emphasizes that “the maintenance of a company in Rwanda is an embarrassment for the Army staff in the present circumstances.”⁴³ Moreover, despite the agreement given by François Mitterrand, “the deterrence flights of F1Cs and F1CRs previously mentioned are not, for the moment, on the agenda.”⁴⁴ This abandonment, which is probably a sign of the EMA’s reluctance to commit resources and equipment in a visible and audible manner, shows the differences of opinion between the Élysée Palace and the Ministry of Defense on what the limits of French involvement in Rwanda should be. Indeed, Jean-René Gehan notes: “One may wonder about the appropriateness of deterrence flights by F1Cs and F1CRs stationed in the CAR. This would be a direct demonstration of support without any link to the preservation of the security of foreign cooperants, an argument that can be used to justify the first two proposals.”⁴⁵ This argument was not, however, retained upstream by the President of the Republic who, as we have seen, gave his agreement. On the other hand, “the setting up of an operational assistance detachment (DAO) of about thirty men is planned” while remaining subordinate to the results of the mission of the Minister of Cooperation and the Arusha Conference.⁴⁶ François Nicoullaud adds, in handwriting: “These are executives who would be sent on a technical assistance mission to the Rwandan army, which should be put back on its feet. FN 8/2.”⁴⁷ The head of the military cabinet of the Minister of Defense agrees: “If a gesticulation was indispensable, it seems to me that we should give priority to the DAO (discretion and efficiency) over other modes (flights, reinforcements).”⁴⁸

To sum up, France is betting on the fact that the promise of its support, including military support, will force the Rwandan president to make concessions, thereby saving his authority over the country and weakening the RPF. By February, however, military intelligence indicated that the conditions for a stalemate in Rwanda were all in place:

The Rwandan forces have grown rapidly, which is not conducive to strength and effectiveness. There is no solution to the current crisis. President Habyarimana will only agree to a cease-fire if he has crushed the rebels, or at least when he is sure that they can no longer operate from

Uganda. He is not ready to authorize a multiparty system, which would be synonymous with the resumption of ethnic clashes.

For its part, the RPF is waging a low cost war, which it will only stop after obtaining a (territorial) pledge or (credible) political promises from Kigali.⁴⁹

The *Centre d'exploitation du renseignement militaire* (CERM) emphasizes that part of Rwandan political radicalism - and therefore the difficulty in moving away from a military approach to resolving the problem with the RPF - is due to the position of the Rwandan president. Finally, the link made by the intelligence service between multiparty politics and ethnic tensions can be noted. This link is all the more surprising given that, for example, a few days before, the head of EMT Noroît, reporting these tensions, did not link them to the multi-party system but rather to the forces in the gravitating orbit of the Rwandan president.⁵⁰ Thus, the month of February 1991 attests to the pressure exerted on the French administrations in charge of French policy in Rwanda. The political choice of military involvement and in-depth support for President Habyarimana obliges the Ministry of Defense, the Armed Forces General Staff, military intelligence, and Cooperation to implement the requested policy. However, they regularly emphasize the extent to which this strategy is based on the bet that it will force the Rwandan president to change his policy towards greater democratization of the country and a peaceful resolution of tensions, even though the unwavering French military presence is above all read as a pledge given to him personally.

2.1.4 Settling in Rwanda for the long term

In mid-February 1991, exchanges within the EMA showed that it was a matter of organizing the installation of the force for the longer term, now that it had been the subject of a clear political choice. On 11 February, a summary of the Noroît relief projects was sent to the EMA's Employment Division.⁵¹ The relief of the detachment meant, in fact, its extension by the arrival of new troops to succeed those who had arrived in October of the previous year. This file opens with a handwritten memo from the head of the Noroît detachment, under the authority of Colonel Galinié. The senior officer reports on the spirit in which he

proposes a relief of Noroît: “These proposals are made with a concern for simplicity, efficiency and economy, taking into account the other priorities of the moment (conflict in the Gulf, availability of Guépard) and their consequences.”⁵²

A few lines above, he emphasizes that these proposals are also in agreement with a telephone exchange he had with section 3 of the EMA’s employment division.⁵³ It is then possible to read between the lines of this remark the resumption of the arguments that the CEMA had developed in his note of 2 January 1991 requesting the departure of the Noroît company.⁵⁴ Thus, the EMA, while faithfully implementing political choices, notes that nothing has changed with regard to the world strategic context and French military priorities in the last month.

2.1.4.1 THE CONSTANCY OF THE ÉLYSÉE’S POLICY

Yet it was the fate of the Noroît company that would become a bone of contention between France and President Habyarimana throughout 1991. Or more precisely, between the French ministries, primarily the Ministry of Defense, which was anxious to repatriate a company designed for a one-time intervention rather than for a long mission, and the Rwandan president. The latter sees this as a condition for his political survival and his ability to conduct the negotiations imposed on him. Each time he came to the Élysée Palace, he obtained the support of the president.

On 22 April, Admiral Lanxade sent a memo to President Mitterrand⁵⁵ to prepare his meeting with President Habyarimana. The *Détachement d’Aide et d’Instruction* (DAMI), which had arrived on 3 February, was clearly presented as a sort of substitute in terms of security for the Noroît company, which France wanted to withdraw - something that President Habyarimana is not happy about. The memo very discreetly suggests that it could be argued that his country is no longer really in danger, that DAMI is contributing to calm, and that maintaining the Noroît company is becoming counterproductive in diplomatic terms:

The action of our technical assistance in the training of Rwandan forces is beginning to yield appreciable results. Kigali can already be considered out of danger and the maintenance of the French company

*in the capital is no longer militarily justified. It might even appear to be contrary to the provisions of the cease-fire, which provides for the withdrawal of foreign troops.*⁵⁶

It is not clear from the Élysée archives whether President Habyarimana was convinced in April 1991. He seems to have had strong support at the Élysée Palace in the person of General Quesnot, the President's Chief of Staff. The rare memos kept in the files of the François Mitterrand collection show that in May and June 1991, the general systematically kept the President informed of the "Ugandan-Tutsi" attacks. On 3 May the RPF launches a new offensive. But the training provided by the DAMI had had its effect and the FAR had shown itself capable of recapturing the lost ground. The lexical register of General Quesnot's notes makes it clear that he sees Rwanda as a small country attacked by foreign forces according to classic military strategies: "On 30 April the Ugandan-Tutsi rebels launched a new attack in northwestern Rwanda from their Ugandan bases. [...] The complicity of the Ugandan army with the rebels seems less and less questionable."⁵⁷

Three weeks later, the Chief of Staff told the President that the "Ugandan-Tutsi rebels" probably possessed SAM-type surface-to-air missiles, probably supplied by Uganda.⁵⁸

In June, the French Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Cooperation seemed to want to withdraw at least the company that had arrived in October 1990 as a matter of urgency, and whose departure was planned by the Mission militaire de coopération (MMC) for 19 June. General Quesnot points out this fact, but also mentions what is at stake for the Rwandan president with these troops:

The situation is calm throughout Rwanda except in the northern border area, where incursions by Ugandan-Tutsi rebels continue from their Ugandan bases.

Ugandan President Museveni has expelled the detachment of Rwandan observers who had been involved in border control on the Ugandan side since December 1990... The threat of a rebel offensive towards Kigali is becoming less credible as the operational qualities of the Rwandan Army improve.

In this context, the question arises as to whether the French military elements put in place during the events [...] should be maintained in Rwanda.

[Handwritten comment] "No. Do not withdraw the comp. Do not withdraw our troops yet. Talk to me about it."⁵⁹

President Mitterrand thus clearly appears as the authority who decides whether to maintain the military units in place.

2.1.4.2 DISCORDANT VOICES ON FRENCH POLICY IN RWANDA

The various actors on the French side developed divergent analyses and the EMP positioned itself as the guardian of the President's wishes. Thus, when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a mission to Kigali in July 1991, General Quesnot obtained the participation of his deputy, General Huchon.⁶⁰ The EMP's optimistic analysis of Rwandan democratization was contradicted. The defense attaché in Kigali, Colonel Galinié, just before his departure in June 1991, drew a harsh picture of Rwandan governance; he pointed out the existence in the high-ranking military hierarchy of people whose political project did not correspond at all to the hoped-for and promised democratization, first and foremost Colonel Serubuga.⁶¹ According to the French colonel, the Rwandan liberal ministers "are, in fact, controlled in their actions and decisions by the restricted group of leaders, including a few high-ranking military officers who form the first circle around the president and who effectively have the powers."⁶²

This inner circle is known to the Rwandans and, according to Colonel Galinié, hated.⁶³ These senior Hutu dignitaries systematically sabotage the policy of establishing a party system through a series of actions:

-The indiscriminate reinforcement of the number of personnel and the means of the armed forces in order to control a loyal clientele and, on occasion, to undermine any change by consuming most of the available credits. - Maintaining the fear aroused by the aggressor by regularly announcing, urbi et orbi, the imminent and massive attack of the NRA or the infiltration of commandos in the cities etc... - The sabotage of the emergence of independent parties in the making, by all sorts of pressures and interventions and, on the contrary, the promotion of the new MRND formula [...] - The propagation of fear with regard to political changes by making people believe that they would necessarily be factors of uncontrollable and violent disturbances, if they intervened before victory.⁶⁴

In June 1991, the attaché also pointed out the ambiguities of President Habyarimana himself:

These operations are set up with skill. Some of them were echoed by General Habyarimana himself who, in particular, insisted on the Ugandan threat and favored the transformation of the MRND from a single party into a dominant party, by providing it with multiple material and financial resources and by remaining, against all odds, its president. These actions by the chief magistrate allow some observers to declare either his ambiguous and even complicit attitude, or his destroyed capacity for reflection, or even his lost authority.⁶⁵

In June 1991, Colonel Galinié returned to the reasons for the influence of this inner circle and attributed it to his knowledge of the troubled and violent conditions in which power was established. The influence of this inner circle is not, moreover, due solely to its ability to exploit fear and manipulate the truth. It is, in all probability, also based on “its knowledge of the secrets of the Second Republic” (collective massacres, individual physical eliminations, embezzlement, various forms of prevarication, etc.), which are embarrassing for its members but also for many authorities.⁶⁶

Thus, in the second half of the first six months of 1991, the French defense attaché in Kigali appeared, in fact, to be the main contradictor of the assumptions on which French policy in Rwanda was based. He emphasizes, from memo to memo, that nothing seriously supports the realization of the bet of Rwandan democratization. On the contrary, he points to the permanence of an extremist and violent minority among those close to the Rwandan presidency. At the same time, the question of the intrinsic quality of the FAR in the face of the threat posed by RPF forces justifies the establishment of a specific training and support system: the DAMI. It will contribute to strengthening France’s military presence in Rwanda.

2.2. THE DAMI: A POLITICAL TOOL FOR COOPERATION

The year 1991 was marked by the installation in Rwanda of an aid and training detachment, or DAMI, for the benefit of the Rwandan army. As early as 1990, it became apparent that the FAR did not constitute a sufficiently solid armed force for combat. This observation justified

sending a French detachment to improve their performance. On 3 February, 1991, under pressure from what was perceived as a serious threat to Rwanda, it was decided to set up a DAMI in Rwanda at the highest level of government in France.⁶⁷ Thus, on 6 February, the head of the military cabinet of the Ministry of Defense emphasized the need for such a detachment.

This DAMI is armed by operators from the 1st Marine Infantry Parachute Regiment (1er RPIMa), the Army's main special operations regiment. The regiment, which is the direct heir to the French SAS units formed with British forces during World War II, is capable of training foreign armies, fighting in various hostile environments, providing actionable intelligence and conducting direct actions of strategic value to the command.

The essential element of this system is its long duration in Rwanda. Indeed, while it was set up to help the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) to retrain after the October 1990 war over a period of four months, until 1992 there was a constant increase in the number of its missions, which progressively covered an ever wider spectrum of actions in the fields of Defense and internal security in Rwanda. Over this long period, several singular aspects are noteworthy, including the actors of the time in the staffs. Thus, the designation of the objectives, but also of the sites where the DAMI operates, appears to be the product of power relations in which the Military Cooperation Mission (MMC), like the Armed Forces Staff, is both rarely consulted and, above all, rarely followed. The archival documentation available makes it possible to highlight, in these choices, the influence of the Rwandan presidency relayed by the diplomatic post, as well as the importance of the French president's personal staff, which contributed, in particular, to the extension of the DAMI mechanism in its various forms.

The deployment of DAMI is clarified by a report of the Africa meeting dated 20 February 1991. This document indicates that this decision was taken at the highest level of the State: "The President of the Republic had, moreover, given his agreement to the installation

of a DAMI (military training elements of approximately 30 men) in Ruhengeri (northern Rwanda).” It specified that it had been postponed until the Summit [of Dar-es-Salam on refugees, 19 February, 1991]:

*“having agreed that this measure would only be taken if President Habyarimana showed a real willingness to open up politically and engage in dialogue. Since the Rwandan head of State has taken on board most of our recommendations (amnesty, the right to Rwandan nationality and to the return of refugees, cease-fire, dialogue with the RPF), the dispatch of the DAMI to Rubengeri can now be prepared.”*⁶⁸

The idea of making French military aid conditional was therefore raised. It was linked to an international agreement under the auspices of the OAU, bringing together Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania as well as the Prime Minister of Zaire. Representatives of the European Community, the United States and Canada were “invited to be represented by their ambassadors with observer status.”

2.2.1 The establishment of the DAMI: what mission?

On 3 February, Admiral Lanxade wrote a summary memo to the President of the Republic on the Rwandan situation. On this occasion, he mentioned the interest in sending a DAMI of around thirty men to Rwanda to support the Rwandan forces in Ruhengeri.⁶⁹ While positioning it at the heart of the Rwandan strategic system around the Ruhengeri-Gisenyi axis, the admiral specified its field of action - training and support for Rwandan forces “to the exclusion of any mission involving contact with Ugandan-Tutsi forces.”⁷⁰ In February 1991, when the Armed Forces General Staff decided in principle to set up an operational assistance detachment (DAO)⁷¹ (a designation that was later abandoned in favor of DAMI⁷²), the deputy head of operations at the EMA set out the basis for the DAMI project in a note addressed to the military cooperation mission:

This DAMI would have the following mission:

Alfa: the reorientation of the Rwandan armed forces, more specifically that of the units located in the Gisenyi Ruhengeri sectors.

Bravo: to allow the return of French and foreign cooperants in this area and to ensure their protection while waiting for reinforcements to arrive if one of these cities were to be attacked. This last part is confidential.

*Tertio: The DAMI would carry out its training mission in Rubengeri itself.*⁷³

Thus, as early as 13 February, at the Armed Forces headquarters, the Employment Division, which was responsible for defining the conditions and objectives for the use of troops, planned a meeting on the formation of the DAMI, which at that time was still designated as the DAO; the meeting was scheduled for 18 February,⁷⁴ and the implementation of resources began at the end of February. Thus, on 22 February, EMAT made an urgent request for secure communication equipment for the 1st RPIMa.⁷⁵

The very political dimension of this mission is reflected in the meticulous attention given to it by the authorities at the highest level:

According to your directives and in agreement with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Cooperation, the following French military arrangements are being implemented:

- *Technical relief and under the staffing envelope of the Company pre-positioned in Kigali,*
- *Dispatch of a temporary military assistance and training detachment (DAMI) of about thirty advisors to train Rwandan cadres of the units recently set up in the Ruhengeri sector.*

These detachments have been given strict instructions not to become involved in operations. [Handwritten comment] "Seen. Okay. FM."⁷⁶

The implementation of the DAMI was seen as an instrument of pressure on Rwanda, since in exchange President Habyarimana promised to engage in peace negotiations with the RPF, for which a surrender and arms deposit operation was planned.⁷⁷ The memo is optimistic. One can even imagine that the RPF will lay down its arms, which is mentioned in the following memo, still addressed to the president.⁷⁸

On 15 March, Lieutenant-Colonel Chollet and twenty soldiers from the 1st Marine Parachute Infantry Regiment were appointed.⁷⁹ The number of soldiers in the detachment was quickly increased to thirty and its installation in Ruhengeri, on the premises of the university, was confirmed.⁸⁰ On 20 March, 1991, the instructions given concerning the use of the military assistance and training detachment from Ruhengeri specified the dual dimension of the DAMI. A draft instruction to the defense attaché in Kigali, signed by General Schmitt and dated 20 March 1991, indicated that the DAMI detachment in Ruhengeri can participate in training but also ensure the protection of foreigners in Ruhengeri, and to this end take actions on its own initiative and report back later.⁸¹

In addition, the detachment has to "provide information on the local situation,

limiting itself to the passive collection of information.”⁸² As for intelligence, General Schmitt specifies: “It is you who will send me the summary of the information gathered by the DAMI.”⁸³ These provisions must “obviously” remain confidential.⁸⁴ Thus, between February and March 1991, there was a clear extension of the missions of the DAMI.

2.2.2 *The DAMI's training work*

The DAMI's training activity is documented by the various reports that its chief, Lieutenant-Colonel Chollet, sends in via the Defense Attaché and the Ministry of Cooperation. The training action, as it was conceived for 1991 and most of 1992, is carried out by entire units, the idea being to take established units, to reinforce their collective action skills and, at the same time, to improve the skills of their cadres. The reports are all presented in a fairly homogeneous form that is representative of the activities and objectives: a presentation of the activities carried out, followed by a systematic evaluation of the cadres belonging to the units.⁸⁵

The implementation of this system is given special attention and there is an awareness of its implications for the fragile regional balance.⁸⁶ The political importance of the DAMI was confirmed in the spring, when it was mentioned in a memo from the EMP to the President of the Republic in preparation for a meeting with his Rwandan counterpart:

*The military assistance and training detachment (DAMI) set up in the Ruhengeri region continues to retrain Rwandan units and to train the area's cadres. Security in the area is steadily improving, and it seems difficult to envisage another rebel raid, unless the Ugandan Army provides direct support, which is unlikely in the current context. [handwritten note] seen.*⁸⁷

The trained units belong to a restricted circle. The Gitarama battalion,⁸⁸ the commando units,⁸⁹ the 32nd battalion,⁹⁰ the Ruhengeri battalion, also known as the “Ruhengeri commando”⁹¹ and the 63rd battalion⁹² were all trained. There are also more specialized trainings, particularly those linked to support, such as artillery and snipers.⁹³ According to the available reports, we can therefore observe a

change in the pace of training, which was very intense in 1991 and then seemed to run out of steam. This slowdown is, as we shall see, linked to a change in the training provided by the DAMI from 1992 onwards. The units trained by the cooperants are considered by the Rwandans to be elite FAR units and they are, moreover, very active on the front.

The reports also propose a substantive evaluation of all the cadres that make up these units. As the training is designed to enhance the military capabilities of battalions, companies, and platoons, the reports include assessments of battalion commanders, often with the rank of major or captain; company commanders, who are most often captains; and platoon leaders, primarily lieutenants and second lieutenants, but also a myriad of non-commissioned officers, sergeants, first sergeants, sergeant majors, and first sergeant majors. Of all these soldiers who are evaluated by the DAMI's French cooperants, all or almost all seem to have a military career until 1994. Although it is not easy to trace the careers of all of them, it is clear that some of them, belonging to a unit that received French refresher training, were involved in the genocide.⁹⁴

2.2.3 The extension of the DAMI's domain

In the summer of 1991, it seemed necessary not only to extend the mission, as the ambassador emphasized on 1 July⁹⁵ but also to maintain the French officers commanding the detachment for the duration of the mission.⁹⁶ The prospect of maintaining the detachment seems to stem from President General Habyarimana's insistence that the DAMI remain in Rwanda, as noted by the Kigali post:

The insistence of the Rwandan head of State on this particular element of our military cooperation is not only due to the obligation to perfect the combat training of the recently increased strength of the Rwandan army, but undoubtedly also to the desire to maintain the cohesion of this army in a period of fragile political evolution. The coming months of July and August will be marked by the official constitution of parties and by the debate on the modalities and timing of elections [...].⁹⁷

The effect of this Rwandan concern is immediate and, on 19 June, a

TD signed by the Director of African and Malagasy Affairs, Paul Dijoud, announces that no decision has yet been made for either Noroît or DAMI.⁹⁸ The size of the mission, 25 men, is decided on 18 September.⁹⁹ However, there is clear pressure from Rwanda to move the DAMI closer to the front line by installing it in Mukamira. This move initially raises doubts on the part of the EMA in Paris: “In order not to give the impression that its role had evolved into an engagement on the ground alongside local forces, the DAMI must remain in Ruhengeri.”¹⁰⁰ These doubts are taken up again on 5 September 1991 in a memo from the EMA’s Employment Division, which is particularly well argued,¹⁰¹ and concludes with a refusal that aligned the EMA with the MMC: “General Varret, who knows the area well, is not in favor of this detachment and considers that training can very well continue in Ruhengeri under the present conditions. Proposal: not to accept the secondment of an element to Gabiro.”¹⁰²

The proposal is therefore endorsed by the head of the Military Cooperation Mission in Paris.¹⁰³ The refusal is justified by the spirit of the training mission assigned to the DAMI: “In order to respect the spirit of the DAMI’s mission, its installation elsewhere than in Ruhengeri should not be envisaged. I therefore ask you to propose a new location in Ruhengeri.”¹⁰⁴

Conversely, it appears that the French embassy and the cooperation mission in Kigali are the spokespersons for the Rwandan arguments;¹⁰⁵ both support the need to evacuate the French installation in Ruhengeri because students are to move in there. Thus, messages from the defense attaché echo all the advantages of relocating¹⁰⁶ and the pressure is effective: the Military Cooperation Mission gave in on 18 September by agreeing to move to Mukamira.¹⁰⁷

In parallel with the relocation of the DAMI to Mukamira, a second geographic file for the detachment was opened with the dispatch to northeastern Rwanda of a group to Gabiro. The defense attaché, who had requested this move on behalf of the Rwandans on 2 September, was firmly refused by the EMA in a message dated 9 [September].¹⁰⁸ The EMA then based its refusal on the opinion of General Varret: “Following the unfavorable opinion expressed by the General, head of the Military

Cooperation Mission, the secondment of nine DAMI personnel to Gabiro has not been approved.”¹⁰⁹ On 11 October, 1991, in a message co-signed by Ambassador Martres and Colonel Cussac, the French post reiterates the need to extend the DAMI’s mission to eight months, and to send a detachment to Gabiro now that the Rwandan authorities were requesting training on the ground.¹¹⁰ The version of this message intended for the EMA, kept at the SHD, is the subject of two handwritten memos, one concerning the duration: “the DAMI was initially planned for 4 months!” and the other concerning Gabiro: “35 km from the Ugandan border.”¹¹¹ These two annotations underline the extent to which, for the EMA offices, the Rwandan requests and their relays from the diplomatic post constitute a shift from the initial project.

The CEMA, however, finally decides in favor of the options defended in Kigali. The final decision, in favor of the Rwandan demands, was taken in December 1991: “following his visit to Rwanda, the CEMA gave his agreement in principle to the detachment of a DAMI to GABIRO [...]”¹¹² In February 1992, the defense attaché announces the installation of French soldiers in Gabiro for two months, renewable, prompting this handwritten comment from the EMA: “I don’t think that was the contract!”¹¹³

It should be noted that the decision is not only made by the CEMA himself, but above all that it was made during a visit to Rwanda and a meeting with President Habyarimana. Thus, the DAMI gradually transformed and changed location; the short-term mission became long-term and then permanent, ending only in 1993; moreover, although it was intended to be far from the front, the DAMI gradually moved closer to it. The cause of these transformations, which seem to have been incurred, although followed, by the EMA (opposed to the MMC) is the political pressure effectively exerted by the Rwandans.

2.3 TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE FRENCH SYSTEM IN RWANDA (1992)

2.3.1 Support despite the massacres

A message dated 22 January 1992¹¹⁴ from the defense attaché, Colonel Cussac, provides an understanding of how insecurity, propaganda

and the arming of militias are linked to RPF attacks in early 1992. The modest scale of the shelling and attacks is striking. In fact, the information transmitted to Paris coming from the FAR headquarters and the defense attaché give it the value C2, i.e., very low. It is as if the Rwandan authorities are taking note of limited provocations in order to implement their agenda: in this case, to arm civilian militias under the pretext of self-defense.

These border incidents provide a pretext for a campaign of false information. For example, the defense attaché reports information from the FAR that he classifies as D3 – its value is therefore estimated as particularly low. According to a radio intercept, “the RPF has also launched a campaign of false documents such as school diplomas and professional certificates, in order to integrate into the workforce as soon as it can.” This is characteristically news designed to frighten people who are anxious that they will be driven out of their positions by the return of Tutsi emigrants. The Rwandan government used this as a pretext to conceive the project of arming self-defense militias at the border: “The Rwandan Minister of the Interior decided after the last massacre of civilians to arm the population of the border zone.”¹¹⁵ The defense attaché contacted the chief of staff of the Rwandan gendarmerie for clarification:

Will the weapons only be used against the RPF? Is there not a risk that they will be used for personal, ethnic and political vengeance? Will the links between the FAR and the self-defense militias be sufficiently monitored to avoid any misunderstanding? Under what conditions will they be reintegrated? It is to be feared, he writes, that the local notables who will designate the bearers of arms and who are all from the administration set up by the MRND (former single party) will favor the nationals of that party.¹¹⁶

The beginning of 1992 was thus marked by French feverishness in Rwanda when tensions were running through the Rwandan territory and society. In moments of crisis, Noroît’s soldiers go to see if the French settled in the north need anything - which is generally the case.¹¹⁷ When the threats became more specific, a combat group (no more than ten men) is dispatched: thus, in the week of 21 March, “a combat group in Mukamira”¹¹⁸ and the following week, one unit plus a combat group were

sent to Butare on 12 and 13 April to determine whether there were any threats to the Europeans. In addition, since the beginning of 1992, the French army has renewed its deliveries of arms to the FAR, in addition to the purchases made by Rwanda from other countries.¹¹⁹

The murder of a French nun, Sister Guido Poppa, on 27 February, in the town of Rushaki on Rwanda's northern border, initiates an immediate intervention by President Habyarimana. He informs the ambassador that Rwanda is under threat, as well as French nationals, and that it would be appropriate to reinforce the assistance provided, as evidenced by the message that Ambassador Martres sent on 29 February to the Department of Defense.¹²⁰ The response from Paris is measured. On 4 March (i.e. five days later), the EMP notes that the question of French action arises if one follows the defense attaché,¹²¹ but it remains skeptical about the interest of getting involved. It reminds the DA that "no operation to maintain order, no commitment alongside or for the benefit of the FAR can be carried out without an express order from the CEMA."¹²² This does not prevent Colonel Cussac from insisting in his messages addressed exclusively to military correspondents, messages in which he emphasizes the Rwandan military incapacity.¹²³ For its part, the EMP multiplies the sources of information in order to know how to respond to the pressure from Kigali. A report on Lieutenant-Colonel Chollet's analysis¹²⁴ shows how France's initiatives fit in with rivalries between groups and power struggles between Rwandans.¹²⁵

France is gradually realizing that it must both give more military support to the regime and face up to a form of violent breakdown if it wishes to continue the policy it has pursued in Rwanda since 1990. It is in this context that the Bugesera massacres occur, leading to a radical questioning of France's action.

2.3.1.1 THE BUGESERA MASSACRES: A STUMBLING BLOCK

The massacres of Tutsi in Bugesera, in the southeast, which became known on 6 March 1992, upset the situation. The responsibility of the Rwandan administration in what the ambassador called "a pogrom" was at first unclear according to his telegram of 7 March,¹²⁶ then clearly

identified by him and the defense attaché who, the following day, 8 March, sends two collaborators to the area. They note that “the responsibility of the sub-prefect and the burgomaster in inciting the pogrom is clearly established.”¹²⁷ These findings were later reflected in a summary memo from military intelligence.¹²⁸ Thus, military intelligence identifies a number of more or less deep-rooted causes, going back to previous years: the fear of a Tutsi threat linked to both border incidents with Uganda and tensions in Burundi; the role of Rwandan public radio and, beyond that, of the Rwandan authorities.¹²⁹ French military intelligence points to the deep doubt that must be cast on many of Rwanda’s institutions:

*The known death toll is certainly lower than the truth. It should be noted that this anti-Tutsi pogrom is the first since President Habyarimana came to power in 1973. It underscores its significance [...]. The fear is that the pogroms will spread to the rest of the country if the authorities do not re-establish trust between the two communities, starting by enforcing law and order and avoiding provocations. Civil peace will not return until the conflict with the RPF is resolved, which presupposes negotiation between all parties.*¹³⁰

The political impact of these massacres is quickly perceived. The Embassy decides to make a gesture to show the Rwandan authorities its disapproval by organizing a Noroît humanitarian mission with the Tutsi. A first message signed by Colonel Cussac on 10 March 1992 is a request for authorization to use Noroît for humanitarian aid. It states that:

*Following the inter-ethnic massacres that took place in Bugesera (50 km southeast of Kigali) and that resulted in 200 deaths, there were approximately 500 refugees in Nyamata; the NGO “Aide et Action,” which has a good reputation, would like to distribute twenty tons of food on 11 March. The next day, at the request of the ambassador, the defense attaché asked Paris if the Noroît company could transport this aid on board its vehicles. There will be no military risk. We will have obtained the approval of the Rwandan authorities.*¹³¹

The political stakes are clearly mentioned. This action “would thus make it possible to respond to the criticism of the internal opposition, which was surprised that the French military did not intervene to stop the massacres. The humanitarian intervention of the French army would have a very positive psychological effect.”¹³²

The Rwandan government immediately called the French to order, indicating that if aid was given to the “refugee” Tutsi at the end of the massacres, then symmetrical aid should be given to the Hutu driven out by the RPF offensive.¹³³

The ambassador does not deny the ethnic massacres directed against Tutsi, the involvement of the authorities and in particular the gendarmerie, even if things are euphemistically stated.¹³⁴ He suggests action by the French army¹³⁵ and asks it to make a humanitarian gesture that would have a positive effect.¹³⁶ This message had the effect of influencing decisions in Paris: Cussac sent a copy to Colonel Erlinger so that he could “send a copy to the DAM of Foreign Affairs so that the Minister of Foreign Affairs would be aware of it before the Council of Ministers.”¹³⁷ The general staff reacted quickly and gave its verbal agreement to the DA Kigali “specifying that the mission would only be carried out after the agreement of the local authorities,”¹³⁸ not without adding: “Agreement but it would be necessary not to get involved.”¹³⁹ A message from Martres details the effects of this action.¹⁴⁰ The welcome was warm. The European priests and nuns with whom the Tutsi had taken refuge were happy with the material aid, but above all with the “moral” aid.¹⁴¹ The ambassador, at this time, was aware of the risks of generalizing what he still called “confrontation.”¹⁴²

The government in Kigali, however, is furious. It believes that France’s neutrality has been broken. On 17 March, Colonel Cussac therefore sends a new message to Colonel Erlinger and asks him if the *Noroît* detachment could be authorized to send humanitarian aid of the same kind to Ruhengeri and Byumba, where the Hutu populations displaced by the RPF offensive are located.¹⁴³ This will be carried out.

2.3.1.2 A QUESTIONING OF FRENCH AID TO RWANDA

In this troubled context, the general conditions of French aid to Rwanda are the subject of reflection at all civilian and military levels. At the beginning of March, the Bugesera massacres have not yet taken their toll and only the specter of RPF military pressure haunts those who wanted to support Rwanda. Under these conditions, it is clear that the system

has failed because it was not effective. Subsequently, as news from the region confirmed that the country was plunging into violence, the idea of a renewal of the Rwandan interlocutors emerged. This new reality explains France's efforts during the months of April and May to exchange with the Rwandan opposition.

On 5 March 1992, at general staff headquarters, a radical observation was made about the Rwandan situation: "It does not seem possible to 'help' our 'friends' any more without maintaining order and interfering. As for our training, it is useless to increase its volume because, given the results, either it is not pedagogical, or we are dealing with bad students."¹⁴⁴ The conclusion is that the French military will have to get involved if a decision is taken in high places. "The solution to this problem is political; however, the military can participate in the implementation of the decision taken. Doing nothing is the worst solution and it puts the military in a position that is quickly untenable."¹⁴⁵

The Minister of Defense's office was equally cautious. On 6 March, 1992, Colonel Fruchard sent a memo to the Minister to shed light on the situation in Rwanda.¹⁴⁶ He noted that the negotiations had come to nothing and that the RPF was exerting constant pressure on the Rwandan army, even though Uganda's support was difficult to demonstrate.¹⁴⁷ In a way, he also notes a form of inefficiency in the French system. A question persists as to the interest of reinforcing aid to Rwanda in a more direct way, as General Mercier indicated on 9 March.¹⁴⁸ He took up the proposal of a military advisor to the Rwandan general staff, who suggested that French planes fly over the area and that *Noroît* fly a mission to contact Rwandan nationals in the north of the country for 24 or 48 hours.¹⁴⁹ Thus, the continuity of French support to Rwanda was no longer discussed in the administrations, as attested by the memo from Paul Dijoud, the new DAM, dated 10 March, 1992:

It is therefore necessary to reinforce France's support to the Rwandan army. The reinforcement and support of France to the Rwandan army would make it possible to reverse these factors. In particular, it would be useful to give the Rwandan army the ability to operate at night. Similarly, the return of a high-level French military advisor to the Rwandan general staff would have

*-immediate consequences. Finally, the acquisition of certain equipment that is effective in this type of combat should be considered rapidly.*¹⁵⁰

The memo ends with a proposal by Paul Dijoud to go to the region in person to “make the necessary contacts to relaunch French policy.”¹⁵¹ In the context of the preparation of an interministerial meeting, initiated by the Ministry of Defense, which was to deal in particular with Rwanda, the idea that the reinforcement of French support should involve the establishment of an advisor to the FAR staff began to gain consensus as the difficulties in Rwanda became apparent to everyone. A memo from the Employment Division of the Armed Forces Staff emphasized this.¹⁵² Just before this inter-ministerial meeting, on 10 March, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the staff again summarized its proposals, which had not changed.¹⁵³

The laborious appointment of an advisor to the FAR

Between March and April 1992, the appointment of a French officer to the FAR staff encountered difficulties that were symptomatic of the hesitations and even differences of opinion that were emerging in Paris among military and institutional actors.¹⁵⁴ If, at the beginning of March, the idea was put forward at an interministerial meeting, it was at the beginning of April that the question had to be decided. The stakes are high, because this appointment could send a strong signal of support, with the advisor directly reinforcing the Rwandan army’s ability to resist the RPF. On the other hand, it would signal an evolution of France’s policy towards the Rwandan authorities, insofar as the positioning of this advisor, outside the presidency of the Rwandan Republic, would mean a distancing from President Habyarimana.

The first trace of reflections on the ideal candidate is a handwritten, undated note from General Huchon on the letterhead of the Presidency of the Republic. The EMP explains who his candidate is.¹⁵⁵ The criteria for his choice are enlightening: he must fit into the power stakes and the conflicts of political line that run through all French policy in Africa, and in particular the rivalry between Cooperation and the Army.¹⁵⁶ On this occasion, he twice stated how he did not want to be seen as acting in the matter.¹⁵⁷ Firstly,

the Armed Forces Staff established a file for this purpose on 17 March.¹⁵⁸ It contains a document that describes precisely what the military staff expects from the officer in place in Kigali.¹⁵⁹ The position would be placed with the Rwandan president as the “establishment of a deputy defense attaché whose real mission would be to be (*vis*) advisor to the Rwandan president.”¹⁶⁰ At this point, the Armed Forces Staff was considering appointing the candidate suggested by the EMP.¹⁶¹

When, on 9 April 1992, an interministerial meeting was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss African issues, the positions of the various French actors were, in part, divergent.¹⁶² Around the ministers Roland Dumas, Pierre Joxe and Marcel Debarge, the ministries concerned were represented, as well as the President of the Republic, whose deputy chief of staff, General Huchon, was also present. If the principle of supplying military equipment was decided, the provision of an officer to serve as a military advisor to the EM FAR appeared sensitive in the eyes of all. One question calls for precautions: “The ministers decide that it is appropriate to appoint a deputy military attaché and to remain flexible on the conditions of his attachment in order to guarantee the greatest efficiency.”¹⁶³

These precautions of language hide the desire not to settle the debate on the positioning of the putative advisor. In the end, an army officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Jean-Jacques Maurin, was appointed on 17 April 1992.¹⁶⁴ The choice of an army officer seemed to open a conflict with the defense attaché, a gendarmerie colonel. On 13 April, a draft letter of mission for Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin stated that he would be “called upon to fulfill the function of military advisor to the Chief of Staff” “or to any other person who will be designated to you.”¹⁶⁵ His position is directly related to anticipating the military threat of the RPF.¹⁶⁶ The officer appointed will act under the authority of the military attaché “who remains responsible for the implementation of our military cooperation policy.” He will have to more strongly mobilize the DAMI and possibly the other teams of cooperants as well as Noroît.¹⁶⁷ The FAR staff advisor must be in French uniform and be discreet at the same time: “Acting in principle in French uniform, you will ensure great discretion in your military dress and in your words

on and off duty.”¹⁶⁸ Finally, he must report directly to the General Staff in Paris: “Without encroaching on the responsibilities of the Defense Attaché - head of MAM, you will report directly to the EMA on your assessment of the situation (RE. 5 and Job 3) using the various existing networks.”¹⁶⁹

Thus, in April 1992, the staff in Paris took the opportunity to endorse the appointment of an advisor to the Chief of Staff in Rwanda. This happened under the watchful eye of the Élysée, which let it happen. A “Personal and Secret Instruction for the Defense Attaché in Kigali” was signed on 17 April 1992 by Admiral Lanxade, Chief of Staff of the Army. From the outset, it placed the appointment of Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin within the framework of *Noroît* and not within that of the cooperation agreement, which would not really authorize such a decision. It refers to the messages of February and March 1991 which establish the framework for *Noroît*’s action; the role of the officer is clearly set out in the Rwandan context of March 1992 defined as a “crisis”: “His role will consist of discreetly advising the Chief of Staff of the FAR on everything concerning the conduct of operations, but also the preparation and training of the Rwandan armed forces (FAR).”¹⁷⁰

The aim is clearly “to improve the operational capabilities of the FAR” and to ensure greater coherence of French action, i.e., the action of the DAMI/1st RPIMa, the military cooperants and the *Noroît* detachment, so as to contribute to the improvement of the FAR’s operational capabilities.”

The need for great discretion was reaffirmed,¹⁷¹ and Colonel Cussac was put in charge of this new arrangement by the General Staff in Paris.¹⁷² After one month of the new deputy’s presence in Kigali, the defense attaché was severely called to order on May 27, 1992, by the staff in Paris for not having reported as he was required to do. A “Note for Colonel Cussac, Defense Attaché in Kigali and Commander of Operation *Noroît*” signed by Mercier for Admiral Lanxade, states: “Since the installation of this officer, no document concerning the development of the mission has reached the Army staff, neither in a personal capacity as I prescribed, nor in any other way.”¹⁷³

This document also gives an idea of how the information

was used: integration into the process of preparing interministerial and defense meetings; ministerial meeting on Monday, interministerial meeting on Tuesday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and possibly discussion of the dossier at the Council of Ministers at the Élysée on Wednesday. Thus, this appointment shows the desire of the Army staff in Paris to act more directly with the armed forces and thus to distance itself to some extent from political issues. At the same time, the EMA explicitly wishes to strengthen its ability to understand the situation on the ground in order to better prepare decision-making in Paris.

The Presidential Guard: disengaging

The desire to better understand, to act more effectively and, if necessary, to take distance from risky cooperation projects, leads to a review of French support for the Rwandan Presidential Guard.

On 2 April, the French ambassador draws attention to the issue of technical assistance to the Presidential Guard, an issue that would be followed closely at the Élysée. In essence, the DAMI and Noroît should be maintained as they reassure the Europeans and even the Rwandan opposition, but the training of the Presidential Guard is a source of suspicion:

There are complaints that this presence is an encouragement to the regime in place or that it is not used with sufficient weight to change it. There are also complaints that, in addition to protecting our own citizens, the French army does not also guarantee better security for the civilian population, and in particular for ethnic minorities threatened with abuse.... The same cannot be said of the assistance we give to the Presidential Guard. It turns out that there is a confused amalgam between the Presidential Guard, the security services and mysterious 'death squads' that are seen as maintaining terror in the country.¹⁷⁴

In the presidential archives, there is a small file on this issue dated April 1992 and entitled: "What to do? Should we help the Presidential Guard?"¹⁷⁵ A memo dated 6 April, signed by the Chief of Staff, General Quesnot, and Thierry de Beaucé, the mission head, allows us to follow the thinking at the Élysée.¹⁷⁶ The Chief of Staff recognized that "Rwanda was going through a difficult period,"¹⁷⁷ and that the country was experiencing massacres as a result of the current government. "On both sides, tensions are fanned. Inter-ethnic massacres

have been perpetrated by militias close to the party in power [probably highlighted by the secretary general of the Élysée]. The Rwandan army and gendarmerie avoided intervening. International opinion has been alerted.”¹⁷⁸

Despite this situation, and because the RPF is still perceived as an external threat from Uganda and because the French military presence is considered to be stabilizing and reassuring, leaving is not considered an option. This memo does not contain any annotation, but a sheet of paper is attached with handwritten words (circled in highlighter) that appear to be in Thierry de Beaucé’s handwriting: “General, amended but amendable. Shouldn’t we ask ourselves, like the ambassador, about our assistance to the Presidential Guard?”¹⁷⁹

The question of the training of the Presidential Guard is not only a point of vulnerability of the French presence - as the ambassador points out - but also a bone of contention between the staff and the Cooperation and Defense Department in Paris; a Cooperation and Defense meeting is scheduled for 31 March 1992.¹⁸⁰ It can be noted that the functioning of the services obeyed rules that are generally observed. However, Colonel Delort used the pretext of a poorly transmitted message from DA Kigali concerning arms purchases from Thomson Brandt on 30 March to denounce the lack of trust that existed between Cooperation and the general staff at that time.¹⁸¹ The training of the Rwandan Presidential Guard seems to be a point of tension between the French administrations; the Cooperation does not keep the Defense Department informed of the instructions it gives to the defense attaché in Kigali.¹⁸² However, at the end of March 1992, the general staff was certainly dissatisfied, but it remained cautious. It was not a question of inadvertently stepping on the toes of the President of the Republic. The sheet drawn up by Delort bears a handwritten note: “Attention. He is a former GSPR [Groupe de sécurité du président de la République]. Talk to Huchon about it and keep me informed.”¹⁸³ Despite this, the DAMI Presidential Guard was reorganized in favor of the Rwandan Gendarmerie, a sign that the collective thinking of the administrations is recognizing the gravity of the situation.

In the end, these reflections led to the maintenance of France’s support to the FAR, but with a desire to change the policy of the Rwandan regime.

2.3.1.3 ATTEMPTS TO INFLUENCE RWANDAN POLICY IN MAY 1992

As early as 2 April, Paul Dijoud affirmed that while the reinforcement of military aid would be appropriate, it was also necessary to look for interlocutors in the Rwandan opposition and to engage in regional diplomatic action: “if these suggestions were accepted, a French personality could go to the region to make the necessary contacts to relaunch our action.”¹⁸⁴ The possibility of a French diplomatic change was sketched out, but the military context and the pressure exerted by RPF forces continued to weigh on French thinking.

From 28 April onwards, the RPF attacks were both numerous and small in scale, more akin to harassment. The FAR held out with difficulty. After the attacks of 26 and 27 April, on the morning of the 27th, the position of Gicwamba (9 km northwest of Nyagatare) was recaptured by the FAR at the cost of 8 dead, 33 seriously wounded and 49 slightly wounded in the ranks of the 17th Battalion (ex-Byumba Battalion), which had led the assault. The attackers left 25 dead in the position, as well as some equipment. One prisoner was also taken by the FAR. “The operation carried out yesterday in the Karama area met with strong rebel resistance and was suspended. It is expected to resume this morning.” On the same day, mortar fire on the commune of Muvumba and the Bushara bridge 11 kilometers southwest of Nyagatare left nine people dead and four seriously wounded. The bridge was destroyed, there was mortar fire, and during the night “a rebel platoon tried to cross the Muvumba” and was repelled by the FAR¹⁸⁵ whose military quality is still a problem:

*On the same day [28 April], the ‘sweep’ operation in the Karama region was a failure. Carried out by the para-commando battalion, and had to be cut short because, once again, it was very late in setting up (several hours); the rebel elements installed in Karama were able to adjust their fire and force the para-commando battalion to withdraw.*¹⁸⁶

In May, messages from the Defense attaché described, as before, attacks that were poorly repelled or not at all, counter-offensives that mostly failed and, more and more often, troops that gave up without fighting.¹⁸⁷ From 5 May onwards, RPF pressure took

the form of a multitude of small incidents: attacks and mortar fire here; positions taken there, elsewhere a wounded person, or a withdrawal. Harassed in this way, the FAR suffered their most serious losses since the beginning of the war.¹⁸⁸ Their poor conduct led the military attaché to make ironic comments.¹⁸⁹ More worryingly, the FAR's elite troops were at the end of their tether and there were also reports of desertion and banditry.¹⁹⁰

This pressure and military collapse weighed on the French units of *Noroît*. The latter continue to carry out security missions in Kigali in parallel, and "nomadizations" on the northern border with very small, highly mobile forces. *Noroît*'s missions were not limited to the northern border and occasionally extended as far as Butare. At the beginning of April, the protection of the nuns was an opportunity to show a military presence in the Bugesera region, where the Tutsi were particularly threatened.¹⁹¹ The following week, the missions in Kigali remained unchanged; combat sections were on the move in the Gabiro, Kibungo and Akagera regions; there was a trace of the humanitarian aid mission in Bugesera, where a combat section was sent on 18 April 1992 (to deliver aid, but perhaps also to give a signal to the perpetrators of the Bugesera massacres). The following week, from 20 to 22 April, a combat platoon was sent to reconnoitre the axes in the regions of Gitarama, Ruhengeri and Gisenyi¹⁹² and another to Cyangugu.¹⁹³ The establishment of the first transitional government in mid-April made it possible to envisage a reduction in French resources in Rwanda, possibly affecting the DAMI but not *Noroît*, which was considered too important.¹⁹⁴ Ambassador Martres had a precise vision of the interests at stake.¹⁹⁵

In this context, on 5 May, Paul Dijoud proposed an "update of the political directives on Rwanda."¹⁹⁶ It began with a political assessment of the situation in Rwanda. His reasoning was as follows: the appointment by President Habyarimana of a new Prime Minister from the opposition to form a coalition government was a positive thing; however, the RPF was increasing its military pressure on the ground and was perhaps even seeking to drive him from power. In addition to diplomatic support measures, more aid to the FAR is needed. It is always a question of improving their effectiveness.¹⁹⁷ This memo by Paul Dijoud therefore suggests

that France's actions do not really break with the previous line: pressure on the Ugandan president to stop supporting the RPF, in order to avoid the collapse of Rwanda. "France must do everything possible to avoid this eventuality. To this end, it should help the Rwandan army, in agreement with the Rwandan president and prime minister, to improve its performance against the RPF (two lines in the margin by the EM)."¹⁹⁸

In that first week of May 1992, President Habyarimana wrote to President Mitterrand.¹⁹⁹ His concerns were more financial than military, but it was clear that he understood that any aid from France was conditional on his respecting the political agenda it imposed. The Rwandan president began by thanking France for its "firm" and "invaluable" support. "This support has facilitated, among other things, the advancement of several national causes": the continuation of the political aggiornamento, which began on 15 January 1989 with a revision of the Constitution (10 June, 1991) that made possible the evolution to fourteen political parties, and the shared management of the transition period. The Prime Minister of an opposition party, Dismas Nsengiyaremye, was appointed in early April and his coalition government was sworn in on 16 April.

*The national cohesion, which is even more evident, will make it possible, I hope, to definitively confuse the criminal amalgamations made by the aggressors between, on the one hand, political competition, favored by the multiparty system within the country, and, on the other hand, the hegemonic aims of the aggressor, at the service of the troubled causes of the Ugandan president, and diabolically maintaining the confusion with the 'internal opposition.'*²⁰⁰

He then mentions the dual form of the war waged by the RPF: night-time infiltrations by armed groups on the one hand, and bombardments of a 3-5 km border strip with multiple-headed rockets on the other. In addition, he says, it is difficult for him to respect the structural adjustment program signed with the Bretton Woods institutions. Basically, it was the war that was the "cause of almost all of Rwanda's problems," including "tensions of all kinds."²⁰¹ President Habyarimana therefore asked for support to put pressure on Uganda and to intervene with the Bretton Woods institutions. No document has been

preserved that makes it possible to know what response was given to this letter, but it preceded by a few days a visit planned well before this date by General Varret to Rwanda as part of an inspection of the French forces engaged in cooperation.²⁰²

General Varret's visit to the region between 8 and 12 May seems to have more important consequences. It may mark a change in policy and in any case illustrates the choices made by the Cooperation in the region, choices that are not necessarily shared by the Élysée and even the EMA. General Varret had meetings with the new Prime Minister, Dismas Nsengiyaremye, and the President that clarified France's position on the political choices of the new Rwandan government, which were very different from those of the President. Three telegrams signed by Ambassador Martres, preserved in the EMA Emploi archives, report in detail the meetings that General Varret had with each of them in turn, accompanied in all cases by the ambassador. He then met with Mr. Cohen (USA).²⁰³ It is as if these two visits brought out a new line of action for France in Rwanda. The meeting with the Prime Minister made it possible to clarify its priorities. Dismas Nsengiyaremye showed himself ready to discuss with the RPF without making the return of the territories occupied by its troops a prerequisite. He agreed that these discussions would take place in Tanzania. He also proposed separating the issue of relations with Uganda from the rest of the dossier; he envisaged the prospect of a partial dismissal of the army and declared himself ready to have recourse to France's expertise in this area because of its extensive knowledge of the Rwandan army.²⁰⁴ General Varret seems to agree:

*He expects to benefit from French expertise, both in terms of training and logistical support. He is also concerned about the problems that will arise at the time of the demobilization of troops, which will be inevitable if Rwanda succeeds in restoring peace. Aware that these problems will be very difficult to manage, he believes that we are qualified by the quality of the relations we have established with the Rwandan army to help solve them [...] General Varret welcomed these two requests, which correspond to the sectors in which we have particular experience with regard to the reorganization of the gendarmerie, the urgency of which is obvious.*²⁰⁵

Jean Varret then mentioned the attacks, and the ambassador the possibility of French aid.²⁰⁶ At the end of the meeting, the Prime Minister spoke of the dangers of France abandoning its role.²⁰⁷ The meeting with

the President of the Republic had a different tone.²⁰⁸ The latter was unhappy, in particular with the appointment of the French officer to the FAR Chief of Staff and not to him. He reaffirmed his positions - which had hardly changed since 1990: refusal to engage in dialogue with the RPF, which was seen as a foreign party, and a request for increased French military aid.²⁰⁹ On 27 May, General Varret wrote a report that seemed to prepare the visit of his minister, Marcel Debarge.²¹⁰ He discreetly highlighted the differences between the Rwandan president and his prime minister, and took stock of the rapidly growing French aid: "The country's civilian and military leaders all thanked me for the French aid given to the Rwandan army since the beginning of the conflict in October 1990. MMC's aid has effectively tripled both in terms of military cooperants (from 15 to 52) and in terms of equipment donations. According to the military cooperants, the Rwandan units, with a few exceptions, are weary and hardly capable of taking decisive offensive action in the next few days."²¹¹

Jean Varret notes that the Rwandan Prime Minister and the Ministry of Defense want a "complete reorganization of the general staff," with the departure of Colonel Serubuga, General Rwagafilita of the gendarmerie, as well as Colonel Sagatwa, head of the president's private secretariat, but that "it is unlikely that the president will easily accept the retirement of these three faithful representatives of the intransigent tendency of his army."²¹² General Varret supports the reduction in the number of FAR personnel and above all the principle of not creating a mono-ethnic army, and he points out the divergence between Nsengiyaremye and Habyarimana regarding the dismissal of the army.²¹³ Finally, he emphasizes the inflation of French military aid.²¹⁴ In a nutshell, this report expresses a rather critical view of the effectiveness of the policy followed up to that point, at a time when new partners could allow for new directions.

On 21 May, another memo by Paul Dijoud deals first with France's plans for Rwanda's internal policy. This one was written the day after the trip made by the Minister of Cooperation Marcel

Debarge to the region.²¹⁵ It is a form of criticism of President Habyarimana's intransigence and the hope placed in the liberal government to restart negotiations:

[President Habyarimana] also seems to rule out a cease-fire before the RPF has been pushed back across the Rwandan border.

The coalition government, on the other hand, is open: it seems willing to accept a cease-fire in situ, is making arrangements for passports for Rwandan refugees in neighboring countries, and is ready to negotiate the participation of the RPF in power, the holding of a national conference and even the integration of the RPF army into the Rwandan forces.

*France must firmly encourage all parties to negotiate.*²¹⁶

France therefore intends to encourage the parties to engage in talks in both Paris and Tanzania: this will be Arusha.²¹⁷ But for this to happen, Rwanda would have to avoid a military collapse. But this is what seems to be threatening:

*For the balance of the region and in the perspective of the negotiations, it is imperative that Rwanda not be in a weak military position [...] France must ensure that Rwanda does not experience a military collapse and is able to face the escalation of violence that threatens, in particular, the foreign communities. It is therefore necessary to study ways to help the Rwandan authorities in this regard and to rapidly define the measures to be implemented. It will be necessary to take into account the discouragement of the FAR and their weak fighting spirit, which is further accentuated by the prospect of political negotiations with the RPF and a cease-fire.*²¹⁸

These negotiations took place in a context of military pressure from the RPF. In mid-May - on 11, 12 and 13 May - the RPF increased its attacks more intensely than usual, and on 15 May, the news was alarming.²¹⁹ A factual view of the disposition of the FAR may be misleading as to the solidity of their positions on the border. The comments, however, underline the extreme fragility of the position.²²⁰ The situation is all the more alarming because the Rwandan authorities do not want to see that the problem lies with the men and the command: they still believe in the virtue of mortars: "However, the FAR staff asserts that the delivery of 1,000 120 shells (which arrived last night) should allow them to regain the initiative in the offensive."²²¹

In Paris, the general staff was informed of RPF attacks as early as 15 May.

The FAR, aware of their fragility, requested mortar ammunition, which was immediately delivered. However, the command did not want to alert the French to the real causes of the situation: desertions and poor command. It took pains to prevent Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin, officially the advisor to the Rwandan Chief of Staff, from going to see the sector chiefs, even though he had been installed at the heart of the FAR high command since 27 April.²²² The message of the 29th, in an impersonal tone, describes a perilous situation; the memo can be read at face value: it documents, in fact, above all what Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin has failed to do. He is at his best with Colonel Serubuga - whom the Prime Minister is about to dismiss - and he has still not been received by President Habyarimana, who is no doubt displeased to know that he is positioned close to the Chief of Staff,²²³ even though his position is that of an advisor integrated into the heart of the Rwandan army.²²⁴ In addition, Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin is working on the reorganization or creation of several units focused on intelligence, a very well identified weak point of the FAR: "While waiting to be presented to the President of the Rwandan Republic, he is currently being asked to design an intelligence company based on CRAP [commandos for intelligence and in-depth action] teams, Rasura groups and a surveillance section."²²⁵

However, Jean-Jacques Maurin remained far from the sensitive sectors of the front, which seemed to be hidden from him.²²⁶ Intelligence became a major issue, especially since the FAR command, under the direction of Colonel Serubuga, seemed less and less reliable. The COIA archives show that General Mercier received informal, but precise, intelligence feedback from Bayonne, signed by Colonel Rosier, commander of the 1st RPIMa. The field of intelligence largely concerns the functioning of the French system in Rwanda, where it seems that the different French institutions in charge of monitoring the issue do not all trust each other:

First, the establishment of Lcl Maurin Rwanda. His arrival seems to be little appreciated by the gendarmerie entourage of the DA; on the other hand, the latter seems to be satisfied with the presence of an OPS deputy at his side. Maurin also seems to have declared open war on the DA's entourage, including the head of the DMAT ALAT. Secondly, however, there was total cooperation with the head of the DAMI.²²⁷

The second part of the message is a political analysis of the situation in Rwanda.²²⁸ Thus, in Paris, whether at the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Military Cooperation Mission, the idea that the direction of France's action in Rwanda should be profoundly changed is increasingly clear. At this level, that of the administrations and senior officials, French military support now only makes sense if it allows for the opening of broad negotiations, and therefore if it is used to put pressure on President Habyarimana. This policy also presupposes Rwanda's ability to withstand RPF military pressure, which seems less and less possible. The prospect of the opening of negotiations pushes the RPF to accentuate this pressure, which destabilizes the FAR and the Rwandan parties and thus weakens the hypothetical French plans.

2.3.2 The crisis of June 1992

The beginning of June 1992 saw the collapse of the FAR at the northern border at the same time that negotiations began between the new Rwandan government and the RPF in Paris, following the diplomatic initiatives of the summer of 1991. The French army was forced to intervene decisively. A gradual change in the mandate was then observed. Long-term solutions had to be devised to provide Rwanda with support likely to stabilize the northern front in the new context of government negotiations with the RPF.

2.3.2.1 THE COLLAPSE OF THE FAR OBSERVED BY THE FRENCH

At the end of May, the situation in northern Rwanda deteriorated further, as can be seen in the march and operation log of the 2nd RIMa. The FAR turned into looters.²²⁹ In this context of collapse, the RPF attacked Byumba on 4 June.²³⁰ The RPF battalions are described (according to sources that seem to be primarily from the FAR) as being well supported by the Ugandan NRA; they are said to have artillery behind the border.²³¹ The military intelligence note states that the negotiations in Paris would not have the agreement of the Rwandan government.²³² On 5 and 6 June, these took place under French auspices between representatives of the new government in Kigali and the RPF. It was to protest against

these negotiations that the Hutu extremists organized a demonstration that degenerated in the north of the country; it was perhaps to influence these negotiations that the RPF moved its troops. Finally, the prospect of a cease-fire is not unrelated to the desertion of FAR soldiers and the discontent of officers.

Urgent requests for help, following a hypothetical attack

On 5 June at 8 a.m., President Habyarimana called the French ambassador to inform him that Byumba had been attacked and that it was an offensive by President Museveni “in connection with the negotiations that are opening today in Paris.”²³³ Ambassador Martres was not certain of the extent of the attack, but it was “in any case necessary to reinforce the Noroît detachment.”²³⁴ He then passed on the request of the Minister of Defense: “In conclusion, Mr. Gasana asked me for direct French intervention in the form of 90 mm ammunition. These will be lacking in the AMLs, which are currently directed towards Byumba.”²³⁵ On 6 June 1992, the Armed Forces Staff announced the arrival of a detachment under the command of Colonel Rosier. Colonel Cussac was to propose combat arrangements including the Noroît units and the DAMI for Sunday 7 June at noon: “This plan is obviously confidential and must not be made known to the Rwandan authorities.”²³⁶ The instructions drew a subtle line between the humanitarian nature of the mission²³⁷ and the need not to appear to be supporting the FAR.²³⁸ At the same time, the French representatives on the ground noted the collapse of Rwandan capabilities:

*The rebels, whose strength did not exceed one battalion, retreated north without being intercepted. Their losses are estimated at about thirty killed, two thirds of whom were civilians that the Rwandans, as usual, did not try to identify before burying them. ... The Noroît section will return to Kigali this evening. All the French nationals have already been safe since yesterday morning.*²³⁹

On 8 June, military intelligence amplified these analyses by emphasizing the collapse of the FAR and the effectiveness of the RPF forces.²⁴⁰ In the context of the Rwandan cohabitation between the President and his Prime Minister, France’s position was delicate, as it was at odds

with the executive and the FAR. The Prime Minister asked France to intervene in this spirit: “Mr. Nsengiyaremye would like us to intervene directly,” the ambassador said, “but he would not want us to lose the role of moderator that he would like us to keep.”²⁴¹

The Rwandans even specify the type of intervention they expect: an airlift to prevent RPF vehicles from crossing the Gatuna bridge, possibly the bombing of the Gatuna bridge to prevent it being taken over by the RPF, and finally the occupation and protection of Byumba for the same reason.²⁴² The Prime Minister waited for a response from Paris before meeting with Habyarimana, and linked the two issues: command reform and French aid. The ambassador emphasized that if France were to intervene, it would have to warn the RPF that there was a limit to what it could do, while assuring it “that our concern is to promote a political balance in Rwanda where it must find its place, which involves rejecting the dictatorship but which also excludes any regime change.”²⁴³

On 10 June 1992, the Prime Minister succeeded in changing the command of the army. Colonel Serubuga, Chief of Staff, was replaced by Colonel Nsabimana, former commander of the Mutara operational sector. Colonel Rwagafilita, Chief of Staff of the gendarmerie, was replaced by Colonel Ndindiliyimana (not a gendarme), a former Minister of Defense. The French have new interlocutors.²⁴⁴ The Prime Minister is now in favor of the principle of French aid: “The change in the FAR high command has led to a modest improvement in the situation: the departure of Colonels Serubuga and Rwagafilita, respectively Chief of the Defense Staff and Chief of the Gendarmerie, replaced by Deogratias Nsabimana and Augustin Ndindiliyimana. The Rwandan PM welcomes the deployment of French troops.”²⁴⁵ Dismas Nsengiyaremye distances himself from President Habyarimana. Thinking that a hardline attitude would be suicidal, he “expects France to provide assistance that is proportionate to the result [...]: namely, a balance of power that will make the negotiations beneficial to both parties.”²⁴⁶

The report for the week of 15 June 1992 mentions, for the Kigali sector, in addition to firing in Kanombe on 10 and 13 June,²⁴⁷ that Noroît was involved in maintaining calm in Kigali: reconnaissance of the locations of nationals, two interventions

in the Kiyovu district on 19 June to collect and evacuate the wounded; search for looters, recovery of ammunition (unexploded DFs).²⁴⁸ The military situation deteriorated. "Limited shelling took place, but the FAR's efforts to retake certain localities were failures."²⁴⁹ In Paris, discussions between the government and the RPF²⁵⁰ led to the RPF's demands for the merger of the two armies in conflict. This is a crucial point for the FAR.

Finally, still on 10 June, France's response concerning a direct military engagement arrived in Kigali: "France does not wish to directly engage its military resources in the Rwandan conflict."²⁵¹ This observation led to the dispatch of an expert mission to find a way to strengthen the French presence.²⁵²

Analyzing the Rwandan situation militarily: sending the first Delort mission

In Paris, attempts were made to analyze the situation and to develop a joint response by the various parties involved: Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, Defense and of course EMP. The past few weeks have seen divergent analyses. On 13 February, Pierre Joxe's speech to the seminar of heads of military assistance missions mentioned the need for greater coordination between the two ministries on defense issues.²⁵³ Since 9 April, no meetings of ministers concerned with African affairs have been held; they have been replaced by meetings organized under the authority of the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Initially preparatory meetings, they have become, in fact, coordination meetings. However, the first ten days of June corresponded to a time when the office of the Minister of Defense was working to revise French policy on Defense agreements with African countries. This policy clashes with the prerogatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, which consider defense to be a major issue in the cooperation that France maintains with certain African countries. Jean-Claude Mallet, director of the DAS, reminded the Minister of Defense in a memo dated 13 June that the position of his ministry was "extremely perilous. The Ministry is totally isolated in the high-level meetings where this subject is discussed."²⁵⁴ Thus, sending the mission of Colonels

Rosier and Delort to Rwanda allowed the Ministry of Defense to diagnose the options that remained open.

From 12 to 16 June, Colonel Delort (EMA/RE), in charge of “external relations and Africa” for the CEMA, was in Rwanda.²⁵⁵ The two Rwandan chiefs of staff accompanied the French to the front and together they worked out solutions and proposals. There has been a significant change in the position of the Rwandan general staff, in line with that of the Prime Minister.²⁵⁶ Even if the military situation is serious, the aim is not to drive the RPF out of the country but to create the conditions for negotiating with it.²⁵⁷ Furthermore, the French mission is listening to Rwandan requests.²⁵⁸

In this difficult situation, President Habyarimana, as always, sought the direct support of President Mitterrand. On 16 June, Gilles Vidal, chargé de mission at the presidency, wrote a memo on President Habyarimana’s request for an audience.²⁵⁹ He emphasized the democratization process that was underway, and pointed out the desire of “the RPF rebels [...] to strengthen their positions and extend the territories they control in Rwanda before agreeing to a cease-fire.” At the Élysée Palace, it is believed that:

For the balance of the region and with a view to the negotiations, it is important that the authorities in Kigali are not in a weak position militarily.

On the other hand, we have supported the peace negotiations between the Rwandan authorities and the RPF. In this regard, we have initiated several meetings (in October 1991 and January 1992) and hosted the one held from 6 to 8 June, during which we were expressly asked to be observers in the direct negotiations initiated by the parties.

President Habyarimana should therefore be received. President Mitterrand agreed. The memo bears his initials and “yes.”²⁶⁰

After the field visits and meetings, the Delort report concludes on four points: the maintenance of Noroît, the formation of an artillery battery, the training of Rwandan military cadres, and the training of gendarmerie units.²⁶¹ For Noroît, the report even envisages sending elements beyond Kigali to the north: “The elements of the mission can be modified so that 50% of the resources remain in Kigali and the other half is, when necessary, present on the ground.”²⁶²

As far as the DAMI is concerned, it is necessary to “start the operational training

course for the 270 second lieutenants on 22 June, which will last several weeks and will require the DAMI to be reinforced with new instructors.”²⁶³ Above all, the French should be permanently integrated into the command of the FAR at the operational level: “Authorize, with rules of conduct, LCL Maurin, the head of the DAMI and his deputy to provide occasional command advice to the three sector commanders of Byumba, Ruhengeri and Mutara.”²⁶⁴

Finally, the FAR should be provided with firepower to balance that of the RPF. The cost of this assistance is considered to be low in terms of men: “given the specialists already present, only one additional officer is needed” because at this stage of the discussion only the transfer of artillery pieces is envisaged. As far as the DAMI gendarmerie is concerned, a five-month program of reorganization is planned.²⁶⁵ Delort also planned a reorganization of the French system: the headquarters in Paris should be better informed and not be dependent on the FAR in this respect. The defense attaché would be joined by a specialized officer who would rely on the ROEM [Renseignement d’origine électromagnétique] and on all the French units present. It was necessary to “put in place as soon as possible an officer who would ensure, under the orders of the DA, the entire intelligence function based on the elements provided by Noroît (including ROEM), the DAMI, the cooperants, and LCL Maurin, the command advisor to the CEM.”²⁶⁶ This marks the desire to emancipate intelligence.

The conclusion of the Delort mission’s report is worth noting because it analyses, in the words of its Rwandan interlocutors, the risk of returning “to the era of the great ethnic massacres.”²⁶⁷ The conclusion is clear: it is necessary to help the FAR, especially since it is the moderates who are requesting it:

*Thus the mission believes that very urgent aid should be given to Rwanda to prevent the RPF, comforted by its successes, from exceeding the objectives it initially set for itself to reach the capital. Indeed, in the words of the measured Colonel Nsabimana, Rwanda would then sink into “a bloody civil war spread throughout the country,” meaning that the era of great ethnic massacres would have returned.*²⁶⁸

The recommendations of a mission like Delort’s are intended to move between ministries and - in this case - to end up in

a note to the Élysée. A memo of 19 June 1992 signed by François Nicoullaud, director of the civilian and military cabinet of the Minister of Defense, provides the Minister of Foreign Affairs - no doubt in his capacity as supervisor of Cooperation - with an update on the aid that could be provided to Rwanda.²⁶⁹ The memo takes up the crisis of the Rwandan security apparatus.²⁷⁰ The Rwandan requests concern the operational readiness of 270 sub-lieutenants, recently graduated; the supply of liaison means, the maintenance of a continuous supply of ammunition, the supply of night vision equipment and above all “the participation of the French detachment set up within the framework of Operation Noroît in a dissuasive action to reassure the population in the rear.”²⁷¹ It is also necessary to train and equip a mobile gendarmerie group and retrain the officers and commanders of the territorial gendarmerie units. The cabinet director noted that support for the FAR command and the training of an artillery battery was a matter for Cooperation. By transmitting the report’s proposals to Foreign Affairs and Cooperation without discussion, Defense seems to be inviting the other two administrations involved to assume their political options in Rwanda without opposing them.

2.3.2.2 THE ORGANIZATION OF FRENCH AID TO RWANDA

It seems necessary to support the Rwandans with a view to negotiation at a time when their army is threatening to collapse. Colonel Delort’s mission made it possible to develop various avenues of military support, particularly in terms of artillery.

The 105 mm battery: a double-edged solution

The 105 artillery battery appeared to the Rwandans as a miraculous solution and to the French as a pragmatic option. A memo from the employment office of the general staff dated 19 June specifies how the artillery company will be levied.²⁷² It will be taken from the allocation of the nearby French operational assistance elements (EFAO): “It is planned to put in place in Rwanda for the benefit of the FAR, the equipment and ammunition of the 105 mm battery of the EFAO, positioned in Bouar (CAR).”²⁷³

The first deliveries must be quick to have a psychological impact. The rotations were planned and should “allow for the installation of all the 105 mm pieces and the initial shells in two weeks, the date of the first rotation being dependent on the date of the decision.”²⁷⁴ Three decision models were envisaged, depending on the urgency and the ability to obtain additional air assets from France.²⁷⁵ This unsigned document is contained in the file card which is marked “Agreement” general s/chef.²⁷⁶ On 20 June, the operation was set up.²⁷⁷ On 22 June, the arrival of the mortar battery is mentioned in the JMO of the 2nd RIMa: “These guns are intended to form the battery of the Rwandan army.” This was followed by other guns and the French personnel capable of operating them.²⁷⁸ It is worth noting that the designation of the battery was very fluid for a few days. Colonel Rosier arrived to take charge of these forces. General Mercier wrote a very clear order on 21 June and showed a certain mistrust of local initiatives which could lead France to join the FAR. He reminded the Defense attaché to whom this order was addressed:

*In no case does it [the Franco-Rwandan plan] mention an immediate commitment, in the combat zone, of 105 mm howitzers, which would be used, moreover, in whole or in part, by French military personnel. Consequently, you are requested to adhere strictly to the provisions of this plan and to take the necessary measures, in agreement with the Rwandan authorities, to ensure that the training of this unit takes place outside the combat zone and beyond the reach of RPF support weapons. I would remind you that the possible involvement of French personnel is of a political nature and that, in this respect, it is clear that you must not take any initiative in this regard and that it is up to you not to place the French detachment indirectly in a situation where it is forced to take part in the fighting in one way or another.*²⁷⁹

On 23 June 1992, General Mercier confirmed in a message addressed to Colonel Cussac that the artillery training given to the Rwandans could only take place with the utmost discretion.²⁸⁰ This particular care in renewing instructions that had already been given elsewhere attests to General Mercier’s concern to keep a very tight rein on French operations concerning these artillery pieces and the personnel accompanying them. But two days later, he had to authorize Colonel Cussac to carry out live firing when no

Rwandan was ready. He attached conditions to his authorization: that the presence of the French be secret and that the mortars not be directed towards the RPF in order to “avoid any misunderstanding and any risk of misinterpretation, you will ensure that these shots are not directed towards RPF positions and that the security instructions are strictly respected.”²⁸¹

In instructions to Colonel Cussac concerning the use of the artillery battery, General Mercier insists that this battery and its personnel must be presented as serving only to train Rwandan soldiers. This insistence not only attests to a concern for Parisian control, but also to the fact that, compared to the requests made in Colonel Delort’s report, the situation of these batteries had already evolved. Indeed, on 17 June, the colonel suggested that only one additional training officer should accompany the battery; however, on 23 June, General Mercier had to specify that “in keeping with the spirit of the plan to reinforce military assistance to the FAR, and more particularly in the context of the training of a battery of 105s, it has been decided to increase the number of “Artillery” specialists from the EFAO.”²⁸²

This change in scale is a sign: the 28 personnel from the 35th parachute artillery regiment give the French forces a new capability, but the instructions clearly state that this is only for training purposes and that the Rwandan authorities should not infer anything else.²⁸³ However, the scenario of a rapid deterioration of the situation is envisaged, as well as the engagement of the battery before the end of the training:

If, before this deadline, the situation were to deteriorate suddenly to the point that a breakthrough on the capital occurred and the safety of our nationals were compromised, and only in such circumstances, the artillery unit could then benefit from the support of French personnel. It goes without saying that such a decision would rest with the Admiral CEMA and him alone.

*These latter arrangements must remain confidential and be accompanied by precautions such that no French personnel can be identified in the direct service of the battery.*²⁸⁴

This form of action in Rwanda had to be seen in the context of a deteriorating military situation. This led to a return to Rwanda by Colonel Delort, from 24 to 30 June. On 26 June, he introduced the notion of “semi-direct aid” because he noted that it was not possible

to fire the 105 mm battery with Rwandan personnel in the days to come: “In a restricted circle, we are studying the possibility of semi-direct actions, i.e. FR/RW battery, with the FR personnel being the least visible but present.”²⁸⁵ This development, already envisaged in Paris, was accentuated in Kigali by the anxiety of the Rwandan interlocutors who saw that the town of Byumba was in danger of falling. Colonel Delort therefore proposed three scenarios to Paris, one of which he preferred: “to deal with the RPF objectives identified and thus stop the opposing thrust that would lead to a complete dislocation of the system.”²⁸⁶ The whole thing was set in a specific context: “the seriousness of the military situation and the political deadline of 10 July (crucial for the stability of the country and the favorable evolution of the regime).”²⁸⁷ At the same time, Colonels Delort and Rosier insisted on the fact that the decision in France could only be political. On 1 July, Colonel Delort again insisted on the seriousness of the political consequences if the Rwandan military system were to break down.²⁸⁸

In June 1992, the setting up of the French artillery system marked both the desire to provide effective support to the Rwandan government while at the same time aiming to remain within the specific legal framework of technical military assistance, which prohibited any form of direct involvement in the fighting.

French involvement in semi-direct support

The French commitment did not prevent Rwanda from making recurrent requests for arms. On 3 July, Colonel Rosier received new directives signed by Admiral Lanxade, which seemed to be directly inspired by the above report.²⁸⁹ They were based on several scenarios that made it possible to assess the exact political and military situation. The first is the most desirable but not the most likely: the FAR manage to hold a front line alone. The third scenario evokes the dislocation of the Rwandan system. Admiral Lanxade is not optimistic in this respect:

*It goes without saying that scenario n° 1 is the most desirable, if not the most likely. All necessary efforts must therefore be made to stabilize the current front line and thus avoid the involvement of French units in the fighting. The major operational assistance effort for the Rwandan Armed Forces, recently undertaken by France, is likely to favor this scenario.*²⁹⁰

The CEMA prefers to consider

Scenario No. 2. The Rwandan army, which is using all its resources to defend the town of Byumba, whose psychological importance is considerable [...] and Mutara, obtains emergency operational assistance.²⁹¹ [At the same time], the RPF targets identified are dealt with, local counter-offensive actions keep the front balanced; the talks continue. Crucial weeks pass. At the end of July, the reserves are replenished.²⁹²

Since this scenario is the most likely, it must be considered in its political context. One must fear an offensive action by the RPF, which wanted to come to the negotiating table from a position of strength: “In this eventuality, the Rwandan authorities would not understand why France would not put at their disposal the means it has granted them and which would allow them to remedy a dangerous situation.” It is therefore necessary to continue to plan a Franco-Rwandan operation that would enable them to react to an RPF offensive in 24 to 48 hours.²⁹³ The orders received were exactly those that had been drawn up on the ground in June: choose a symbolic objective, act in reaction to an offensive and, above all, for the French, not let themselves be seen. There must be no prisoners or French losses, especially on the side of the 105 battery.²⁹⁴ Admiral Lanxade also asked that the French maintain a dissuasive presence in the Ruhengeri/Base area, “outside the combat zone, so as to lighten the Rwandan apparatus,” but without making this known to the Rwandans.²⁹⁵ Finally, no action can be taken without a written order from Paris.²⁹⁶

Since June, the Rwandan authorities have been increasing their requests for the delivery of munitions. The ambassador constantly echoed this, while alerting his correspondents to the difficult relations between the Rwandan president and his prime minister. A message entitled “Request for support from the Rwandan Prime Minister” states:

This request reflects the willingness of Mr. Dismas Nsengiyaremye to support the approach that President Habyarimana intends to make to President Mitterrand this afternoon. However, I can only regret that it was sent to me in writing and copied to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation in Kigali and to the Rwandan ambassador in Paris, which exposes this document to all indiscretions. Martres.²⁹⁷

In this matter, the Rwandan authorities got what they asked for. The archives bear witness to additional deliveries of

105 mm cannons that continued until the last months of the year.²⁹⁸ Within the framework of this commitment to the Rwandan forces to prevent the country's military collapse before the start of negotiations, an important place was given to the support given to the FAR staff. The reinforcement of the resources of the 1st RPIMa in Rwanda within the framework of the DAMI allowed for systematic support of the FAR's chain of command.²⁹⁹ The presence of the 105 mm battery, as well as the advice given to the FAR staff and sector commanders, led to a very strong French influence on Rwandan strategy in the days preceding the cease-fire. Colonel Rosier's influence was evident in the reports he sent to General Mercier and Colonel Lafourcade on 27 July.³⁰⁰ The next day, 28 July, Colonel Rosier emphasized that the RPF would pose a danger to Byumba with a view to a final effort to take this prefecture.³⁰¹ This analysis led him to propose a plan at the end of the morning: "I would like to propose to the FAR EM that it change its priorities and commit the 105 to Byumba tomorrow, with possible reinforcement from the 122 the day after tomorrow (if that is possible)."³⁰² He could influence the Rwandan general staff without going through the head of the latter:

*Although I could not reach the CEM, I convinced the EM this afternoon that the priority of priorities was Byumba again. I therefore have an appointment at 6:00 tomorrow morning with the sector commander for a forceful intervention that I hope will dissuade the RPF concentration from jumping the gun before 31/7.*³⁰³

On the 29th, Colonel Rosier reported to General Mercier that Byumba was being dealt with.³⁰⁴ That day, he still had to influence the choices made by the Rwandan general staff: "I am maintaining the effort on Byumba despite the hesitations of the EM. Tomorrow, the two batteries will intervene, and the 122 will deal with the most distant targets ever reached up to now."³⁰⁵ The following day, the force was reinforced with two batteries until the end of the day.³⁰⁶

The influence of the artillery battery in the final moments of the RPF offensive and the government counter-offensive made it both essential and visible. However, the deployment of this battery, and above all of the French artillerymen, raises the problem of the framework within which France's action was carried out. The French military were increasingly concerned about restoring order, starting with

Colonel Rosier, who pointed out the need to maintain a system based on artillery - but also on surveillance and intelligence - while avoiding being too visibly opposed to the terms of the cease-fire. At the end of July, the colonel therefore proposed reducing the battery, returning it to Bouar, in the Central African Republic, and, in compensation, eventually appointing an artillery officer or AMT radio interceptor in Rwanda.³⁰⁷

2.3.2.3 GETTING OUT OF THE HORNET'S NEST? THINKING ABOUT THE DECLINE IN FRENCH MILITARY RESOURCES

From mid-July onwards, the French tried to withdraw, or at least to withdraw the resources sent in as a matter of urgency in June: a company under the command of Colonel Rosier and a battery of 105s, while the Rwandans were making the greatest efforts to avoid what they saw as an abandonment. At the same time, preparations were being made for the negotiations in Arusha. After the cease-fire on 30 July, the French tried to withdraw as many forces as possible and the Rwandans tried to prevent them from doing so by using their contacts in Paris. The French staff was increasingly upset at not being able to bring back its 105 mm battery - when it was not threatened with having to deliver one or even two more - or its men, of whom there were still more than 300 on the ground in October. The cooperation agreement was rewritten to open the way to new possibilities. The possibility of leaving men on the ground with cooperation cards is being explored, which is risky. The Élysée Palace, which had already been unable to count on the goodwill of General Varret, the head of the MMC, since the spring, was now under pressure from the general staff, which was busy in Yugoslavia and would like to put an end to the Rwanda episode.

In Paris, meetings followed one another in July to decide on a set of decisions concerning the intervention in Rwanda and on new methods of cooperation to deal with the emergency and prepare for the future. Reports came from the defense attaché in Kigali, from the ambassador and from military personnel on duty or on mission; "Africa" meetings were held in Paris, and General Quesnot, who attended, as well as the advisor Bruno Delaye, were able to make their choices prevail. More rarely, interministerial meetings, sometimes under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, prepared the Council of Ministers or a Defense Council. Moreover, President Habyarimana's visits to the Élysée were decisive.

Thus, the day after the “Africa” meeting at the Quai d’Orsay, a note from the head of the EMA’s Employment Division to Colonel Roques on 22 July³⁰⁸ reviews the situation and prepares for an interministerial meeting that “will take place on 29 July at 3:30 p.m. at Matignon, under the chairmanship of Mr. Bérégovoy.”³⁰⁹ The Minister of Defense wanted to have new files that would allow him to show the importance and the cost of the French commitment in Rwanda. This may also be, for Pierre Joxe, a roundabout way of expressing his reserve with regard to the policy conducted in Rwanda.

Rwandan demands and French hesitation

On the ground, in order not to give rise to any reproach that would compromise the cease-fire, the time has come to prepare the Rwandans for a disengagement of the French, which is not without difficulty. For the 105 mm battery, the Ministry of Defense plans to reduce the number of French servicemen gradually and discreetly; the small team that would remain could, if necessary, be quickly supplemented by elements of French forces in the Central African Republic. When Colonel Delort raised the issue in front of his Rwandan interlocutors, he seemed to create a form of panic commensurate with the importance of the artillery in the Rwandan government’s strategy.

The withdrawal of the French artillery on 31 July was announced to his interlocutors by Colonel Rosier in a personal message addressed to Lafourcade:

*Referring to Mr. Dijoud’s statements, I told him (?) that France was banking on the cease-fire of 31 July. Furthermore, I reminded him that the formation of the 105 battery was coming to an end, that of course the Rwandan elements were still missing (so that this unit would be truly autonomous) but that the involvement of the French in its operation was no longer conceivable beyond the date of 31/7, whatever the outcome of the events. Indeed, if the war were to continue without its support being called into question, France would find other ways to help Rwanda. Clearly, our “semi-direct” aid, as I had initially told him, was only temporary.*³¹⁰

However, the hypothesis of the abandonment of “semi-direct support” caused astonishment and a feeling of catastrophe in Kigali. At the beginning of August, Colonel Rosier wrote to Colonel Lafourcade in a “strictly personal” message about what would happen if France did not compensate for the

readjustment of personnel by donating equipment:

A questioning of this fragile edifice would provoke astonishment (remember the tone of the meetings during the "Dijoud trip" carried out in the middle of the "semi-direct scenario") and disaster, because the therapy to be applied to the FAR is a long-term one [...] In my mind, until further information, it involves a readjustment of the number of personnel (so as to eliminate any ambiguity) and compensation in the form of essential equipment.³¹¹

Indeed, Paris and Kigali are no longer in step. While the general staff was studying ways of disengaging, President Habyarimana was not only trying to keep the 105 mm battery in place, but also to obtain a second one that had been promised to him by the French president. Colonel Rosier noted that there was an "ambiguity" in French conduct that became, on 18 August, a misunderstanding that caused the general staff in Paris to react:

Before leaving Rwanda, I would like to report on the misunderstanding that arose concerning the 105 mm guns.

Already in July, the FAR CM had told me that a 2nd battery of 105s would be set up. Informed on this point, I had pointed out to him that the 12 guns available were intended to ensure maximum technical availability for a single battery.

Yesterday, he asked me about this point again, following a meeting he had with President Habyarimana.

Clearly, the President, who is even talking about three batteries, obtained assurances during his visit to Paris. Either he misunderstood and this is embarrassing. Or there is a discrepancy at our level. What they think and what causes their astonishment. In any case, it seems important to me to set the record straight at the appropriate level (PR).³¹²

To speak of a "misunderstanding" is, in the hushed language of the administrations, the sign of a frontal opposition. Clearly, the general staff does not want to give up a second artillery battery under any circumstances, regardless of the promises made or not made by, or on behalf of, the President of the Republic, promises of which it has no official knowledge. Colonel Rosier's message prompted a reaction from the Armed Forces headquarters in Paris.³¹³ It does not appear, however, that there was any decision in favor of the Rwandan request.³¹⁴ However, between the analysis of the misunderstanding and the response, there is a slight discrepancy. Indeed, while Colonel Rosier indicates that the French source of the misunderstanding is at the level of the "PR,"

Colonel Lafourcade's response only involves the French Ministry of Defense and the EMP with General Huchon, who is deputy to the CEMP. On the other hand, neither General Quesnot nor the General Secretariat of the Elysée Palace, or even the President, are committed by the response. In short, the mystery of this information circuit remains total for the actors concerned.

As early as 4 August, the day after the cease-fire and the day before the deployment of the neutral military observer group (GOMN), the general staff in Paris studied the conditions for a "reduction in manpower."³¹⁵ The cease-fire and the anticipated entry into operation of the GOMN observation force meant that the French system had to be revised. A new assessment of the political risks in Rwanda conditioned the ability of the French to disengage. The terms of the EMA's analysis, and in particular the idea that new massacres could be unleashed, were not without their problems: "The Hutus, more particularly the extremist CDR party,³¹⁶ could cause the government to fall and break the cease-fire, believing that too many concessions had been made to the RPF during the Arusha negotiations."³¹⁷ Later on, the same concern is expressed in terms that seem to suggest that it is pressure from the RPF or the desire for negotiation on the part of the moderate parties that is the cause of the threat of massacres:

Internally, the divisions are becoming more pronounced and could lead to violent ethnic incidents between Hutu and Tutsi. The attitude of the political parties in favor of the RPF, and in particular that of the liberal party, in turn led to a hardening of the Hutu opposed to the Arusha accords.³¹⁸

Finally, the hardening is seen as a reaction to the "intransigence" of the RPF.³¹⁹ Under these conditions, there is reason to fear, according to the staff in Paris, "ethnic incidents [leading to] a hunt for Tutsi."³²⁰

2.3.3. *The difficulty of disengaging*

However, the staff felt that the time had come to study the precise conditions for a "reduction in the number of troops involved in Rwanda." First of all, the wager on training is maintained, but in a new form. Withdrawing one of the Noroît companies, regaining control of the 105 mm battery, giving cooperant cards to those who remain, and even

delivering equipment via cooperation: these were all stumbling blocks that throughout August and September delayed the departure of French troops, which had always been envisaged, but never fully realized.

At a time when they are at odds, the Defense and Foreign Affairs ministries consulted each other on how to circumvent the terms of the cease-fire agreement in continuing to help Rwanda. On 6 August, a (rare) letter from the Minister of Defense to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, signed by his director of the civilian and military cabinet, François Nicoulaud, concerned the application of the cease-fire agreements in Rwanda.³²¹ The Defense Department summarizes the problem. Signed on 12 July in anticipation of a cease-fire scheduled for 31 July, the agreements provided for “the suspension of supplies of munitions and any other war material in the field” and “the withdrawal of all foreign troops after the establishment of the GOMN, with the exception of military cooperants in Rwanda following bilateral cooperation agreements.”³²² The problem arises first of all with regard to the ammunition and light weapons that France is about to deliver: 2,000 shells and 20 machine guns. As for the withdrawal of troops, the beginning of a solution was found with the drafting of a rider to the Defense agreement between France and Rwanda: the Defense Department informed Foreign Affairs that it saw no obstacle to this rider being signed. This letter was part of a more general divergence, as the Minister of Defense, Pierre Joxe, was generally opposed to the way the Rwanda affair was being handled. On the question of the signing of a new defense agreement or the overall financing of the French military presence, he will find the means to make this known without blocking decisions.

2.3.3.1. NOROÏT IN SEPTEMBER 1992: EVERYTHING CHANGES AND NOTHING CHANGES

The two Noroît companies seem to have settled in Rwanda for a long time. The French seem to have returned to the routine of their activities before the June offensive, maintaining a dissuasive presence and providing intelligence. At the beginning of September, they were found in nomadic mode south of Ruhengeri, stationed on the Nyakimana campus, in the Agakera park and in Kibuye.³²³ On 4 and 7 September, meetings with the FAR clarified the security of flights to France. Some soldiers left, others arrived.³²⁴ On 14, 15 and 17 October, a group was sent to the Volcanoes Park.³²⁵

The message of 28 September began with a count of the forces present in Rwanda: people divided into several EMTs,³²⁶ some of whom posed a problem for the staff, who wondered “why they were not integrated into the DAMI.”³²⁷ Negotiations between the EMA and Cooperation concerning the soldiers who were to remain in Rwanda in a less visible form were laborious: Cooperation dragged its feet, while the Ministry of Defense was clearly opposed to this and told the ambassador so on 2 October:

*The Ministry of Defense does not want a cooperant card to be issued to the companies of the Noroît detachment. In fact, in addition to the fact that the procedure would certainly be denounced by the RPF, it seems inappropriate to create a precedent by assimilating the setting up of a combat unit to a form of technical cooperation.*³²⁸

The problem of troops not being able to leave Rwanda has not been resolved: there are still too many people. The weekly report of 3 October begins with a reminder of the forces present: still 316 people plus eight administrative supports. The man from the *Detachement Autonome de Transmission* (DAT) has a “situation with Noroît that is being regularized.”

The activities had changed completely, however: the French stopped going to the northern border and prepared for their departure, with commemorations, deliveries of equipment to the GOMN,³²⁹ firing, preparations for examinations, reconnaissance south of Butare and locating nationals. The following week, a presentation of the equipment was organized in the presence of the FAR at the airport and a reconnaissance in the south;³³⁰ the next week, Noroît was present among the nationals of the southern and southeastern region of Kigali.³³¹ At the end of October 1992, a visit was made to the north.³³²

2.3.3.2. OCTOBER: BRINGING THE 105 BATTERY BACK TO KIGALI?

The question of the 105 battery, raised in July, became crucial. RPF attacks on the border followed one another, limited and punctuated by the advances and setbacks of the Arusha negotiations. On 8 October, the FAR undertook to respond locally, but as they were not using their own 120 mm mortars properly, they fired with the 105 mm mortars that had been “given” to them by the French, offending the RPF.

The FAR chief of staff accompanied the French to return the 105 battery back to Kigali, far from the temptations of the front.³³³

At the EMA, a handwritten comment is written: "It is regrettable that the FAR used the 105 mm battery during this period. It is a tactical error that will create a problem with the GOMN and create an additional difficulty in Arusha. What about control? A little tighter control."³³⁴ In the days that followed, the reports from the defense attaché in Paris mentioned these 105 mm shots.³³⁵

At the beginning of October, the conditions of the French military presence in Rwanda, as they had been conceived and applied since 1990, had become obsolete in many respects. The collapse of the FAR calls into question the effectiveness of a policy based on training. The operational intervention of the DAMI at the border, under the guise of training, is increasingly in contradiction with the agreements being negotiated in Arusha. Two companies normally responsible for ad hoc interventions are still in place several months after their arrival, contrary to the principles of their use, which has aroused the opposition of the general staff in Paris. President Habyarimana, who had the ear of the Élysée Palace and even of his Prime Minister, did not want to find himself helpless in the face of an attack on the northern border, which was still considered possible. At the same time, France initiated a diplomatic process.

2.4 INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS AND THE FIRST ARUSHA PROTOCOLS: THE MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR DISENGAGEMENT

The Arusha process, which took place from 29 March, 1991 (N'Sele agreements) to 3 August, 1993, the date of the signing of the agreements between the Rwandan government and the RPF, was seen by France as having two dimensions. It intended to promote a regional settlement of the conflict by bringing together the various countries of the region: Uganda, Zaire, Rwanda, Burundi and Kenya, as well as Tanzania, which hosted the negotiations and assumed the role of "facilitator"; not to mention the Organization of African Unity. At the request of this organization, France was welcomed as an observer along with other States (Senegal, the United States, West Germany). This French mission - whose members changed over the course of two years - had one goal, to encourage the

establishment of an agreement between the different parties to the conflict, and one means, to advise the Rwandan government, one of the parties to the conflict.

How does French diplomacy articulate the two dimensions, support for a regional peace settlement through the OAU and advice to the Rwandan State?

While France, Belgium and Zaire tried to forge links between the various regional partners to find a solution to the Rwandan problem (October 1990-Spring 1991), France played a more significant role between August 1991 and April 1992 by launching its own initiatives. Finally, between June 1992 and January 1993, France was both an actor in the negotiations concerning Rwanda and an observer in those held in Arusha. These negotiations led to the signing of a number of protocols.

2.4.1. The Power Play of two States: France and Zaire (October 1990-Spring 1991)

On 20 October 1990, Field Marshal Mobutu decided to withdraw Zairian troops from Rwanda and to change his policy by launching a diplomatic initiative. This was confirmed on 24 October by the French ambassador in Kenya, who reported the words of the Belgian Prime Minister, Wilfried Mertens, who was touring the region with a high-level delegation (the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defense): “He [Mobutu] is trying to recover the Belgian diplomatic advances and to organise a regional conference centred on the Great Lakes region for his own benefit. In this way, he would pull the rug out from under Brussels and appear to be the “wise man” of the region.³³⁶ Thus, Marshal Mobutu brought together the heads of State of Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda in Gbadolite - his personal residence - on 26 October, 1990.³³⁷

In parallel with Zaire’s efforts, Tanzania made diplomatic efforts by inviting several heads of State from the region (Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and Burundi) on 19 February, 1991.³³⁸ It was finally in Zaire that the ceasefire agreement (known as the N’Sele agreement, in the suburbs of Kinshasa) was signed on 29 March 1991.³³⁹ This was a diplomatic success for Zaire and allowed Field Marshal Mobutu to regain some credit on the international scene. A Group of Military Observers (GOM) was dispatched to the Ugandan-Rwandan border to

monitor the effectiveness of the ceasefire.³⁴⁰ It was composed of “15 Burundians, 15 Zairians, 15 Ugandans, 15 Tanzanians, 5 Rwandans and 5 members of the RPF.” In accordance with his commitments, President Mobutu, for his part, sent his contingent of observers on 30 March.³⁴¹ For its part, France supported regional attempts to settle the issue, and in particular provided financial aid of two million francs to the GOM from May 1991.³⁴²

2.4.2 French diplomatic initiatives: facilitating direct conversations between the RPF and the Rwandan government (October 1991); sending the French Observer Mission to the Ugandan-Rwandan border (November 1991-April 1992)

The deployment of the African observers encountered significant problems. It is also an element of the balance of power between the RPF and the Rwandan government. Yannick Gérard, the French ambassador in Kampala, reported in November 1991, during his meetings with RPF leaders, that they accused “Rwanda of asking the Nigerians to delay sending the group of observers during the massive attacks they were carrying out against the Front.”³⁴³ In January 1992, the Director of Africa in the Ugandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated:

*[Not] understanding why the OAU (Zaire-Nigeria) observer group for the RPF [Rwandan Patriotic Front]-Rwandan Army cease-fire was still not operational. He thought it was a lack of logistics, but I reminded him that France, Germany and Belgium had reiterated their willingness to fund assistance in this regard. The Rwandan ambassador was unable to give a satisfactory explanation of the current attitude of Nigeria, Zaire, or the OAU on this issue.*³⁴⁴

2.4.2.1 FRENCH INITIATIVES: DIRECT TALKS BETWEEN THE RWANDAN GOVERNMENT AND THE RPF (PARIS, 23-25 OCTOBER 1991)

In parallel with its support for attempts at a regional settlement, France launched a diplomatic initiative in the summer of 1991 to encourage direct negotiations between the different parties.³⁴⁵ The Quai d’Orsay hosted the Ugandan and Rwandan foreign ministers in Paris on 14 August 1991,³⁴⁶ but above all the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs (DAM) organized, from 23 to 25 October 1991,

secret meetings between the Rwandan government and the RPF in Paris.³⁴⁷ The two delegations were led respectively by Claver Kanyarushoki, Rwandan ambassador in Kampala, and Pasteur Bizimungu, a Hutu who had joined the RPF.³⁴⁸ The Quai d'Orsay implicitly recognizes a certain modesty in the delegations:

Neither the Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs nor Colonel Kanyarengwe, President of the Front, were able to participate in the discussions when the arrival of the former was confirmed. It appeared that the latter was no longer available; however, this meeting brought two gains. First, a method. In order to allow for a constructive dialogue, it was agreed from the outset not to address the most controversial issues, and in particular that relating to the end of hostilities, but, on the contrary, to define a certain number of common aspirations constituting more or less long-term objectives. This working method has made it possible to draw conclusions that will serve as a basis for future discussions.

On the other hand, the two parties agree on a number of major points:³⁴⁹

1°) The unity of the Rwandan people; 2°) A democratic country; 3°) The right to Rwandan citizenship and the right to return for all refugees; 4°) Equal opportunities for all Rwandans; 5°) Free access to the media; 6°) Respect for human rights; 7°) Peace.

Finally, the two delegations recognize that a political process “to advance democracy is underway in Rwanda” and that “it would be desirable for the RPF to participate in it.” They regret that the continuation of the fighting “prevented this participation.” Finally, “for the two delegations, democratization implies the formation of a transitional government with a broad base.” It is specified that “the absence of publicity and confidentiality are indeed essential to the successful continuation of our efforts.” Thus, it was in Paris that the foundations for a discussion between the Rwandan belligerents were laid. In addition, France proposed an initiative to the Ugandan and Rwandan governments, the creation of a French Observer Mission at the Ugandan-Rwandan border.

2.4.2.2 THE MOF AND THE GOM

Operational from 26 November 1991 to 10 March 1992, this French Observation Mission (MOF) was intended to investigate violations

of the border between Rwanda and Uganda, in the context of the guerrilla warfare led by the RPF against the Rwandan government [...] This MOF was made up of a diplomat, François-Xavier Gendreau, and seven observers provided by the Ministry of Defense.³⁵⁰

According to a memo from the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs dated 22 October, 1991, France expected this mission “to encourage the parties to show restraint and to put an end to any unfounded complaints that may have been made up to that point” and to inform each of the parties and third parties about the behavior of the other party. The aim, according to the memo, is twofold: “on the one hand, for the Ugandan government to moderate its support for the RPF - which might be more inclined to negotiate - and on the other hand, for President Juvénal Habyarimana to be more inclined to continue his openness.”

The Kigali-based MOF faces several problems. First, it is unable to travel to RPF-held areas in Rwanda. Second, although easily identifiable by its white uniforms and vehicles, the MOF was fired upon by automatic weapons, which turned out to be FAR.³⁵¹ Finally, it is traversed by different objectives and practices. Two examples illustrate this: first, the question of the interrogation of RPF prisoners in Kigali by the MOF, which led to a vigorous reaction from the French ambassador to Uganda, Yannick Gérard.³⁵² He pointed out the political risks involved. The question of detecting the origin of artillery fire on either side of the Ugandan-Rwandan border is another important issue. It is desired by both parties. Thus, on 4 October 1991, Yannick Gérard spoke of “the importance that was attached, on the Ugandan side, to France being able, in complete independence, and according to its own sources of information in the region, including ‘with technological means’ (by which he meant acoustic means), to get an exact idea of what was happening in the border zone.”³⁵³ George Martres was also in favor of this, and in a note dated 21 January 1992, he wrote: “Our mission should be equipped with projecting radars, which would remain under our control, so that they could not be used, at least at this stage, as counter-battery radar for the Rwandan army. The Ugandans, as well as the Rwandans, have often appealed to our “sophisticated” means of tracking.”³⁵⁴ The Ugandan Minister of Foreign Affairs even mentioned the possibility of France

sending a helicopter to reinforce the mission's capabilities.³⁵⁵ The sending of detection equipment is a point of divergence between different administrations. For example, a letter written by General Huchon and addressed to Catherine Boivineau, accompanied by a document dated 24 January 1992, reveals the thoughts of the Deputy Chief of Staff: "Your ambassadors are right to ask for counter-battery radar. First, they can be used by the MOF to prove the Ugandan origin of the shooting. Secondly, they can be given to the Rwandans, who will adjust their counter-battery fire (an unpleasant surprise on the RPF side!)."³⁵⁶ The MOF report indicates, by default, that this equipment was not delivered in the end. On 26 February 1992, F. Nicoulaud, the Minister of Defense's chief of staff, informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that "the sending of a mission of French observers (MOF) to the Ugandan-Rwandan border had not produced the expected results."³⁵⁷

In fact, the conclusions of the MOF's report³⁵⁸ issued at the beginning of April 1992 mainly point to "strong presumptions of border violations from Uganda and Rwanda." It concludes that "supplying the RPF, particularly with heavy ammunition, requires logistics that can only be provided in Uganda." The same is true for training and health centers. The MOF asserted that the RPF only had "intermittent access to a few advanced positions in Rwanda [...] it could not therefore conclude that there was a liberated Rwanda that would repay the aid given to the RPF by Uganda." On 20 June, 1992, the Quai d'Orsay delivered the conclusions of the MOF to the Rwandan and Ugandan Foreign Ministers, in the presence of the American Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. While the Ugandan minister "insisted on the imperfect nature of the conclusions of the MOF," Uganda nevertheless declared itself "in agreement with welcoming a new French mission, possibly extended to other countries." However, C. Boivineau notes that Kampala refuses "to accept a monitoring mechanism at this stage," which is considered "in contradiction with the wish expressed by Mr. Ssemogerere,³⁵⁹ the Ugandan Minister of Foreign Affairs, that a new mission of French observers [...] be sent to the border."³⁶⁰ There was another option. In February 1992, the French ambassador to Uganda, Yannick Gérard, advocated another solution:

*It seems to me that the time has come (over the course of March) to have frank and in-depth bilateral Franco-Ugandan meetings on this crisis. [mentioning that] It is now more than a month since President Museveni informed me of his wish to receive a high-level French official in Kampala to discuss the Rwandan crisis in depth.*³⁶¹

He reiterated this request by letter on 1 June.³⁶²

The armed clashes between the RPF and the Rwandan government are an opportunity for several state actors, once the fighting has ended, to deploy diplomatic activity. This is the case of Zaire, supported by France in its efforts to find a regional diplomatic solution in order to regain international legitimacy. Faced with the failure of an African diplomatic solution, France tried to find solutions by contributing to secret RPF-Rwandan government negotiations in Paris and by setting up the MOF at the Rwandan-Ugandan border. By refusing to provide the MOF with counter-battery equipment, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs refuses to choose between the solution proposed by General Huchon and the possibility of shedding light on the origin of the artillery fire at the border. It designated Uganda as the RPF's rear base without providing full proof. In the balance of power that is being established in the Great Lakes region, France is helping to reintroduce Zaire while rejecting the possibility of direct conversations at the highest level with Uganda. This would have been a way of recognizing Uganda's role as a privileged interlocutor in the Rwandan crisis and as a major regional player, which is contested by both Zaire and Kenya. Another factor may have played a role, the importance of the Ugandan military apparatus forged by a decade of internal combat and whose experience and power cannot be overlooked even by the French army and diplomacy.

2.4.3 The OAU, France and the first agreements (June 1992-January 1993)

2.4.3.1 THE ROLE OF THE OAU

The policy of the new Rwandan government led by Mr. Dismas Nsengiyaremye, appointed on 16 April 1992, is to achieve a cease-fire and to "promote national reconciliation."³⁶³ The direct negotiations

with the RPF, which began in June 1992, led to a new ceasefire agreement signed in Arusha on 12 July 1992. This agreement, notes the MIP report, also provided for “power sharing within the framework of a transitional government and the integration of RPF soldiers into the Rwandan army.” It provided for a timetable for negotiations.

Within the framework of the OAU, which offered to facilitate negotiations between the two parties, several meetings were held in Addis Ababa from July 1992 onwards, in particular those setting up the CPM (Political-Military Commission) of Rwanda.³⁶⁴ The CPM³⁶⁵ met once a month and its decisions were taken by consensus. It can “be assisted by experts, it can also call upon countries and any organization capable of helping it to achieve its objectives.” France sits as an observer. On 12 July,

the OAU decided [...] to create a neutral military observer group (GOMN), composed of 50 people, to monitor the buffer zone between the part of Rwanda controlled by the RPF following its attack on 1 October 1990, and the rest of the country [...] the African Affairs Directorate of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs was still of the opinion in May 1993 that the GOMN was still not able to accomplish its task properly.³⁶⁶

In keeping with its desire to involve African states in the regional settlement, France supported the GOMN with a number of measures: transporting observers from their home countries to Kigali, the headquarters of GOMN, providing radio facilities, clothing and various supplies (cots, lamps, binoculars, emergency kits, individual rations, etc.).³⁶⁷ However, a helicopter, a key piece of equipment, was not provided, despite the request made by the GOMN. It was Brigadier Ekundayo Babakayode Opalaye, a Nigerian, who was appointed to lead it.³⁶⁸ The various pieces of equipment were handed over to GOMN on 6 October 1992.³⁶⁹

2.4.3.2 THE ROLE OF THE FRENCH DELEGATION

France was invited to be represented as an observer at Phase III of the Arusha negotiations, which were to take place from 7 to 16 September. The French delegation is composed of François-Xavier Gendreau, Minister Plenipotentiary, Head of Delegation, Colonel

Delort of the French Army Staff, and Jean-Christophe Belliard, First Secretary at the French Embassy in Dar-es-Salam, Tanzania. This mission has its own means of transmission: for the period from 5 to 15 October, 1992, Colonel Roques, who is part of the French delegation, is accompanied by two non-commissioned officers in charge of data transmission by Inmarsat TCS 9000,³⁷⁰ which ensures a certain autonomy in communication. “The delegation will work to promote an agreement between the parties. The objective must be to bring the RPF into the political process underway in Rwanda.”³⁷¹ Specific instructions were given regarding power sharing:

It must be carried out in a way that consolidates openness and allows the RPF to participate fully and peacefully in the political process until elections are held and a national army is formed: our concern is to achieve a gradual dilution of RPF combatants within the FAR [...] The proportion of RPF elements should be a compromise between the demands of the government (1 for 14) and the RPF (a near balance).

It is also specified that France attaches great importance “to the organization of free elections that would unquestionably legitimize the current democratization of Rwanda” as well as the return of refugees.

The Arusha III negotiations ended on 18 September 1992 with a joint communiqué on power sharing within the framework of a broad-based transitional government. In his report, François-Xavier Gendreau highlights the role of the French delegation “by an effect of presence that calmed the debates somewhat. Witnesses, representatives of the governments, who were mute in the session, were able, in meetings organized by the ‘facilitator’ or behind the scenes, to help on several occasions to dispel certain misunderstandings, to modify formulations, and even to seek compromises,” in particular through direct and discreet contacts with the RPF delegation, and “by intervening through the intermediary of the Senegalese observer, who was active and skillful [...] it should be noted here that at no time was any criticism of the French military presence in Rwanda perceived from the rebel side.”³⁷²

2.4.3.3 ARUSHA, POINTS OF DISAGREEMENT AND POINTS OF AGREEMENT (AUGUST 1992-JANUARY 1993)

The Arusha process is a complex process in which the various actors, the Rwandan government, the RPF, the OAU and the

“Tanzanian facilitator” and observers have clearly identified the stumbling blocks, the problematic points to be resolved and a path, that of negotiation, through a policy of “small steps” on points where convergence is possible. The main stumbling block clearly identified: military issues. The issues of human rights and the Broad-Based Transitional Government (BBTG) are points where an agreement seems more easily attainable.

The question of the formation of a national army

The integration of the RPA into the Rwandan army is one of the key issues of the negotiation process and the Arusha Accords. The issue could not be resolved during the secret discussions between the RPF and the Rwandan State held in Paris in October 1991. It is a thorny issue because it defines a possible future balance of power between the two protagonists in the conflict; it pits an army that has had military successes (the RPA) against the FAR, which more often than not retreated during the years 1990-1992.

The discussion about the agreement on the Rwandan army and gendarmerie thus appears to be the focal point of the Arusha negotiations. Each side has objectives before the negotiations. France, the United States and Belgium, although observers, also have a view of what the agreement between the RPF and the Rwandan State should be. Thus, the Americans and French discussed these issues during July and August 1992. Reporting that “a cease-fire specialist that the United States decided to send to Kigali would be there on 5 July 1992,” Catherine Boivineau wrote that “it is important that the emissary have only diplomatic contacts on the French side” and concluded that if the United States had so far shown its concern to intervene “only to complement French efforts [...] it declared that it could not commit either men or means in the future. It would be paradoxical in these circumstances if they were to seek to take a leading role in proposing a cease-fire which French forces could, among other things, be called upon to monitor.”³⁷³

In Washington, the attaché for ground forces at the French embassy in the United States was received at the State Department by Charles Synder, the head of the “East Africa” sector. After stressing that Kagame

was a long-time friend of the United States [...] they had succeeded in convincing him [...] that the time had come to compose [...] as for the modalities [...].

Mr. Snyder sees them in the following way (which he recently explained to Kagame, rallying him to his views): a demilitarized zone - to be determined - monitored by OAU observers would be opened to displaced populations. At the same time, the reduction of the armed forces would be carried out concomitantly according to a ratio that would leave the government with about ten thousand men and the rebellion with about two thousand. The integration of Kagame's (English-speaking) forces into the national army could then be done in small units rather than by diluting the numbers [...] If the conditions were met, the operation could be carried out fairly quickly (one year).³⁷⁴

The French position is quite different. Dominique de Villepin, Deputy Director of the DAM, in a TD dated 28 August 1992 to the French Embassy in Washington, mentions that “while having observer status at the meeting organized by the State Department” it will be important to insist on the need for a cease-fire and “if the question of the modalities for integrating the two armies is raised, you will bear in mind that our concern is to achieve the gradual dilution of RPF combatants within the Rwandan army and not a juxtaposition of formed units that would retain their initial structures.”³⁷⁵ In a letter dated 29 August, 1992, Colonel Cussac, the defense attaché at the French Embassy in Rwanda, reported on the positions of the Rwandan general staff, who wanted to exclude “the gendarmerie from the possibilities of RPF integration,” invoked the need for members of the RPA to be of Rwandan nationality, and finally stated that “the percentage to be respected will be that of 1/14.”³⁷⁶ Several stumbling blocks emerged: the proportion of RPA forces integrated into the FAR, integration by unit or by dissolution, and the role assigned to the gendarmerie in particular.

The first results of the Arusha process: agreement on the first protocols and the role of France (August 1992-January 1993)

Between August 1992 and January 1993, the Rwandan government and the RPF discussed, made progress and reached an agreement on a number of important agreements. First, on 18 August, 1992, the protagonists signed the *Memorandum of Understanding between the government of the Rwandan Republic and the Rwandan Patriotic Front on the rule of law*. Chapter I is devoted to national unity, Article 1 of which states that

National unity must be based on the equality of all citizens before the law, on equal opportunities in all areas as well as on the respect of

fundamental rights as defined, in particular, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Article 2 states that the Rwandan people are “one and indivisible” and affirms that “it [national unity] also implies the need to combat all obstacles to national unity, in particular ethnicism, regionalism, fundamentalism and intolerance which substitute ethnic, regional, religious or personal interest for national interest.” This is reaffirmed in Article 3: “National unity implies the rejection of all exclusions and all forms of discrimination based on ethnicity, region, gender or religion.” Article 8: “The two parties resolutely reject and undertake to combat: political ideologies based on ethnicity, region, religion and intolerance that substitute ethnic, regional, religious or personal interests for the national interest; any form of coup d'état, as being contrary to the democratic system described above.”³⁷⁷

In addition, the two parties agreed on a “Code of Political Ethics” binding the political forces that were to participate in the institutions of the transition. It was adopted on 9 January 1993. In this text, signed by twenty political forces, it should be noted that in Article 1 they undertake to “abstain from all violence, from incitement to violence, by written or verbal messages, or by any other means; to reject and undertake to combat any political ideology and any act whose purpose is to promote discrimination based in particular on ethnicity, region, gender and religion.” This text complements the previous agreements.³⁷⁸

A memo dated 11 December 1992 signed by Catherine Boivineau, the Deputy Director of the Central and Eastern Africa Directorate, points out the positive aspects and uncertainties of the Arusha Agreements. With regard to the uncertainties of the process, it is worth noting the clear opposition expressed by President Habyarimana who, during a speech in Ruhengeri on 15 November 1992, reported by Pasteur Bizimungu, a member of the RPF delegation, described the agreements as a “rag of paper.”³⁷⁹ It notes that following a meeting in Dar-es-Salam with the Tanzanian president “whose role as mediator is undeniable, President Habyarimana considered that it was now possible to believe in a “revival of the Arusha exercise”. He has also accepted a certain number of concessions: not to call into

question the texts signed so far in Arusha,” including the Code of Political Ethics signed on 18 August 1992.

During the period of the Arusha negotiations on the creation of a Broad-Based Transitional Government, France’s action with the Rwandan government was rather difficult to perceive. Catherine Boivineau, in a 22 December 1992 TD to Georges Martres, stated that:

It seems essential and urgent that a compromise be reached for the formation of the expanded transitional government, a condition for the continuation of the Arusha process, since the blocking of the latter could lead to serious consequences, including the resumption of hostilities. The Department therefore shares your opinion on the usefulness of an approach that would nevertheless be made to both the President and the Prime Minister. Without dictating a particular solution (although the idea of assigning key portfolios to independent personalities seems good).³⁸⁰

Catherine Boivineau proposes that this process “could be done jointly by the ambassadors of the Western observer countries as you suggest. It would also be advisable to avoid our being the spokesperson for the group.” It should be noted, however, that in the final days of the negotiations, which were scheduled to end on 10 January 1993, Georges Martres suggested to the Department that the CDR should be part of the Broad-Based Transitional Government.³⁸¹

The DAM’s response went in his direction: “The Department is sensitive to the arguments you are putting forward in support of the participation of the Coalition for the Defense of the Republic (CDR) in the broad-based transitional government. It seems that a solution to the problem of the distribution of portfolios is only possible in this eventuality. The Department would like to know whether your Western colleagues share this approach and whether a joint approach to the President and the Prime Minister along these lines is possible.”³⁸²

In his end-of-mission report dated April 1993, Georges Martres noted: “This settlement [the Arusha 3 bis agreement signed on 9 January 1993] was obviously contested not only by the MRND, but also by the CDR (Hutu nationalists), which was arbitrarily excluded from power-sharing on the grounds of its violent stance on the ethnic problem.”³⁸³

In a diplomatic telegram dated 22 January 1993, the Director of the DAM, Jean-Marc de La Sablière, reminded Ambassador Georges Martres that “it is essential that the Arusha negotiations succeed

and that all Rwandan forces continue to support the process that must lead to the rapid return of war-displaced persons to the land from which they were expelled and to the organization of free elections in the near future,” without denying, however, “the context of heightened tension that prevails in Rwanda.”³⁸⁴ Jean-Marc de La Sablière indicated that “it is essential that the President and the Prime Minister come together and, in particular, send a delegation to Arusha with clear and joint instructions. The ambiguities that have arisen in previous sessions must absolutely be avoided. The return of peace to Rwanda and the maintenance of its stability are at stake.” While differences are being expressed between the ministries of the economy and finance, the director of the cabinet of the minister of the economy, Michel Sapin, recalling that a financial mission visited Kigali last December [1992], stated that:

*The mission noted a profound deterioration of the situation, due to the state of war that has been raging for 18 months [...] this requires the rapid conclusion of the Arusha negotiations and the conclusion of a peace agreement duly respected by all parties, allowing in particular for a sharp reduction in military expenditure, which has now reached an unsustainable level for the State budget.*³⁸⁵

Noting “the impossibility for France to act within the framework of the adjustment, the support provided will have to concentrate on project aid and humanitarian aid [...] It would be appropriate to draw the attention of the French authorities to the economic and financial drift of their country.”

The director of the cabinet of the Minister of the Economy concludes: “France’s political and military commitment in Rwanda gives weight to its word.”³⁸⁶

2.5 THE RECONFIGURATION OF THE ENGAGEMENT IN OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1992

In the autumn of 1992, French military arrangements in Rwanda changed significantly. At the same time, General Quesnot, President Mitterrand’s Chief of Staff, became more directly involved in their implementation.

2.5.1 The DAMI Génie as a manifestation of political influence in military choices

General Quesnot and Dominique de Villepin went to Kigali on 13 and

14 October. Demobilization, restructuring of the Rwandan army and strengthening of military cooperation in an essentially defensive perspective are the priorities of the Prime Minister, Dismas Nsengiyaremye.

*The continuation and strengthening of our military cooperation is strongly desired at all levels...It is on this defensive aspect that the strengthening of our military cooperation must focus, at the same time as it must be placed in a perspective of partial demobilization, restructuring and renovation of the Rwandan army [...].*³⁸⁷

Two days later, on 17 October Ambassador Martres explained that he had seen President Habyarimana again, who was concerned about the report of the visit that General Quesnot had made to Paris. The Rwandan President was always and above all concerned that France should ensure the defense of his country. The ambassador wrote “that it had been clearly indicated during this visit that France would take the necessary measures in the unfortunate event of a new RPF attack.”³⁸⁸

On 22 October, General Quesnot gave some initial indications on this subject.³⁸⁹ His trip, he recalled, had taken place at the express request of President Habyarimana, whose state of mind he reported. The EMP’s proposals to President Mitterrand were more cautious than the wishes of the Rwandan Prime Minister. The withdrawal of a company could be postponed until November, while the prospect of reforming the Rwandan army and integrating members of the RPF - points that were being discussed at the time in Arusha - was not considered urgent. On the other hand, seriously fortifying the border was on the agenda. General Quesnot, in any case, was deeply impressed by the misery of the displaced populations fleeing the RPF. He blamed the RPF for the deterioration of the humanitarian situation:

France’s role in this difficult period was the subject of unanimous expressions of gratitude. The clarity, firmness and continuity of our policy in the face of aggression from the north and in favor of democratic development are appreciated in the measure of the tragedies avoided [...] Essentially, it is a matter of helping the Rwandan authorities in their approach to democracy and in their search for a peaceful settlement of the confrontations through a negotiated solution in Arusha. This assistance must be accompanied by military cooperation measures aimed at consolidating the cease-fire line and discouraging any intention by the RPF to take power in Kigali by force. It must also be part of a medium-term perspective of restructuring the Rwandan Armed Forces

*after the partial integration of RPF forces and the reduction of their overall strength. With regard to the French Noroît force (two infantry companies), I believe that the withdrawal of one company could take place immediately. However, given the negotiations underway and the current concerns of the Rwandan authorities, it seems to me politically desirable, in agreement with the Quai d'Orsay, to proceed with the withdrawal only in mid-November. In this hypothesis, this second company, stationed in Bangui, could, if necessary, return to Rwanda on ten hours' notice. This relief presupposes a normal continuation of the Arusha negotiations.*³⁹⁰

The memo from Jean-Marc de La Sablière of 21 October 1992, entitled "French policy in Rwanda" has a slightly different tone. In particular, it mentions the activities of Hutu extremists, their hostility to anything in the agreements being negotiated in Arusha that might "undermine the powers of the president" and the fact that the FAR are on the verge of revolt, destabilized by the reinstatement of certain officers.³⁹¹ With regard to the new direction of military cooperation, i.e., the construction of a defensive system on the border, Foreign Affairs is worried: the French will have to do some of the work themselves and will consequently be much too close to the front:

*Given that the units of the Rwandan army do not always put into practice, on the front line, the instruction on the organization of the terrain that they have received in the rear for the last eighteen months, the intervention of the DAMI Génie will have to be carried out in the places where it is to be used, and therefore close to the lines of contact with the RPF, if it is to be effective.*³⁹²

Another memo from the Department of African Affairs also expresses this fear and the same idea that training in fortification will make it possible, if not to reverse, at least to maintain the balance of power on the front line.³⁹³ However, the setting up of the DAMI Génie and the fortification of the frontier were to be carried out despite the reservations of Foreign Affairs and the reluctance of the general staff, because it was, as the defense attaché expressly stated, a request from General Quesnot. On 24 October, a message from the DA Kigali took stock of all the activities of the DAMI, and the fourth point concerned the missions of the DAMI Génie.³⁹⁴ The military attaché also found that the detachment was working well near the front line.³⁹⁵ Nevertheless, it had to be put in place because it was a decision taken by the head of the EMP during his trip to Kigali, as he recalled in a message devoted to the allocation of the contingent of seven sappers:

Firstly: Message 1st reference provides for the setting up of 7 sappers for the improvement

of the Rwandan army's defensive system. Msg 2nd reference specifies that the manpower of this DAMI must be taken under envelope of the DAMI Panda currently in Rwanda.

Secondly: if this implementation must be done under cover it will be to the detriment of the training and the recycling in progress of the Rwandan units. This restrictive measure does not seem to be in line with either the priorities set by General Quesnot during his visit, or the current needs expressed by the FAR to continue training its units.

Thirdly: DA Kigali is in favor of setting up this engineering reinforcement without deflating the current DAMI Panda³⁹⁶ [sic] Signed Martres Cussac³⁹⁷

2.5.2 The reluctance of the Army staff

The general staff in Paris is discreetly reticent about the new state of affairs. It is sticking to what has been promised.³⁹⁸ On 29 October 1992, the defense attaché in Kigali made an assessment of the real needs in Rwanda for the attention of the Africa adviser to the Chief of Defense Staff. He estimated them to be lower, but they were nonetheless important. One Noroît company should be maintained for the protection of French nationals, the second one being withdrawn “in the days to come.” The DAMI would be retained, including the two artillery specialists in place.³⁹⁹ Technical military assistant positions were to be created, as well as a senior non-commissioned officer, *Commando de recherche et d'action dans la profondeur* (CRAP), “responsible for the training of a CRAP section which is gaining in strength and whose effectiveness during the war is no longer in question.” The staff offices note sourly that the defense attaché looks to them before drawing on the resources of the MMC.⁴⁰⁰

The DAMI Génie is a bone of contention. When it comes to giving the defense attaché direction on its use, the reluctance of the employment division offices at headquarters is palpable. It is a question of chain of authority:

Following General Quesnot's visit to Kigali, a “DAMI génie” will be set up by the Ministry of Cooperation. In the framework of article 9 of the decree fixing the attributions of the CEMA, we are sending our DA the directives for the use of this engineering detachment.

[Note scops]

Small correction to be made. General, even if we have not been contacted

about the appropriateness of this mission, I find it impossible not to give instructions to our DA that these personnel are leaving this evening. I propose to sign them myself.

Observation by Colonel Michaud: keep carefully the draft given as a model for drafting to S3 and where it appears in the directives given to Colonel Cussac that it is his responsibility to give directives. I did not know that we had been transferred to AE.⁴⁰¹

The offices want to keep a record of their reluctance and more. The directives given to the defense attaché in Kigali concerning the sappers are the subject of an enlightening comparative table between two versions of the same text:⁴⁰²

*Directives for Colonel Cussac DA in Rwanda n°3901
DEF EMA EMP3 CD of 5 November 1992*

Draft version	Final version
<p><i>A detachment of the Army Engineers will be put at your disposal from Monday 2 November, 1992 to train the personnel of the Rwandan army in order to enable them to consolidate the current cease-fire line and, in so doing, to dissuade the RPF from attacking.</i></p> <p><i>The main focus will be to teach them to design and implement land development works to protect both the Rwandan units and, if necessary, GOMN observers. This training will need to be completed by an action of control of the work carried out in the three sectors of the front.</i></p> <p><i>The officers and NCOs will serve as technical assistance and will wear Rwandan uniforms, so they will act openly and transparently. It will be your responsibility to ensure their safety. They should never act in isolation and without a Rwandan protection detail. Moreover, they must limit their presence on the line of contact to what is strictly necessary and, if necessary, interrupt their work in the event of a clash.</i></p>	<p><i>As part of the support to the Rwandan government, it was decided during the meeting granted by President Habyarimana to President Mitterrand's Chief of Staff to place an engineering detachment at the disposal of Kigali.</i></p> <p><i>In application of this decision, the French Minister of Cooperation has set up a military assistance and training detachment to which he will assign its mission.</i></p> <p><i>The nature of this mission may require the cooperants to provide advice to units engaged in the conflict or to monitor work carried out in the immediate vicinity of the line of contact between the FAR and the RPF.</i></p> <p><i>I therefore request that you give the commander of the engineering detachment firm instructions to minimize the risks to our personnel and to allow our activities to be as discreet as possible during the negotiations.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Signed Air Brigadier General Regnault, Chief of the Employment Division⁴⁰³</i></p>

The reluctance of the general staff to send a DAMI Génie is undoubtedly due to the fact that it is a surreptitious reinforcement of the forces permanently in place in Rwanda. Moreover, its presence risks

attracting the attention of the institution responsible for monitoring the cease-fire and being assimilated to direct aid to the FAR:

*DAMI Génie Mission. Given that Rwandan army units do not always put into practice, on the front line, the instruction on the organization of the terrain that they have received in the rear for the past 18 months, the intervention of the DAMI/génie will have to be carried out in the places where they are used and therefore close to the lines of contact with the RPF, which cannot escape the GOMN observers. The head of the detachment would therefore have to receive precise instructions that took this situation into account.*⁴⁰⁴

In turn, in early November, the Armed Forces Staff, while accepting the decision taken by the high authorities, once again emphasized the extent to which this choice entailed risks with regard to the negotiations underway, which France was nevertheless supporting:

As part of the support given to the Rwandan government, it was decided during a meeting granted by President H to President Mitterrand's Chief of Staff to place a Génie detachment at the disposal of Kigali: In application of this decision, the French Minister of Cooperation has set up a military assistance and training detachment whose mission he will determine.

*The nature of this mission may lead the cooperants to provide advice to units engaged in the conflict or to monitor work carried out in the immediate vicinity of the line of contact between the FAR and the RPF. I therefore request that you give the commander of the engineering detachment firm instructions to minimize the risks to our personnel and to allow our activities to be as discreet as possible during the negotiations.*⁴⁰⁵

The concern not to appear to be violating the rules of the cease-fire proved justified, since remarks from the GOMN were made without delay. On 18 and 20 November, messages were sent out indicating that the French sappers had been observed, accused of being "mercenaries" by the RPF members of the GOMN.⁴⁰⁶ These observations led to remarks the following month from the head of the GOMN to the French ambassador:

General Opaleye then informed me that the presence of French military advisors near the battle line (these were essentially elements of the engineering detachment that had been spotted by GOMN in the Byumba sector) worried the RPF and led it to believe that Rwandan troops

*were preparing to resume fighting. According to the general, this led to a resurgence of tension in the area.*⁴⁰⁷

Between November and December the fortification took shape. On 13 November, in a message,⁴⁰⁸ the defense attaché wrote: “after making contact with the Rwandan military authorities, guarantees regarding discretionary and security measures, reconnaissance in the Byumba sector, beginning of training for the 65 cadres planned for 13 November, beginning of work in the sector on 16 November.⁴⁰⁹ It provided for: 500 battle stations, 150 collective weapons emplacements, 100 mortar emplacements, 4 quadritubes, 2 for the MRLs, 1,000 m of trenches, 5,000 m² of shelters and 5 km of obstacles, mines and booby traps.

2.5.3 Two years of French policy as seen by Ambassador Martres

All these military measures were part of a global vision. Those responsible for French policy in Rwanda regularly try to reconstruct the coherence of this policy, as Ambassador Martres did in December 1992. In a very long text, he returned to the context and events.

The ambassador left his post at the end of 1992. President Habyarimana, however, intervened to keep this interlocutor in whom he had complete confidence. Gilles Vidal, in a memo to President Mitterrand, reported his words:

*According to the Rwandan head of State, our representative, a man of dialogue who knew the country's political situation well, was the most capable, in the difficult circumstances Rwanda was going through, of carrying out the actions undertaken by French cooperation.*⁴¹⁰

The end-of-mission report of the French ambassador in Kigali⁴¹¹ provides an assessment of two years and a few months of French policy in Rwanda. Its distribution, contrary to the usual procedures for ambassadors at the end of their mission, is not authorized. There are two possible explanations for this: either because the ambassador's mission was finally extended, or because of the harsh light that his text sheds on the way France weighs on the governance of the country. The report, which obeys

the rules of the genre, retrospectively builds the coherence of an action. A few particular points can be highlighted. First, it makes it possible to reconstruct the anthropological and historical framework of analysis in which the ambassador placed his action; second, it testifies to the intensity of the pressure exerted by France and Western countries to force President Habyarimana to put in place democratization of institutions and political practices; third, it refers to France's increasingly intense military involvement, even though some actors advised trying to disengage.

2.5.3.1 AN AGREED ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

The introduction, entitled "Rwanda in 1989," summarizes the history of a landlocked and populous country that has experienced the great migrations of pastoralists. It takes up without distance one of the topos that was then the basis of the dominant historical and anthropological discourse. "From the very first glance, one can see in the faces and figures of the Rwandans, the mixture between the stocky bodies of the Bantus of the equatorial forest and the graceful elegance of the nomads of the Sahel whose ancestors appear on the frescoes of Tassili."⁴¹² Biological and cultural crossbreeding has taken place, the ambassador continues, but the three ethnic groups, including the Twa, have "remained alive to this day in the collective consciousness."

*Whatever the degree of miscegenation, Rwandans belong to the ethnic group assigned to them by the human environment in which they live, even if this assignment does not conform to their official civil status [...] The division between the Batutsi (14%) and the Bahutu (85%) has been the fabric of national history, right up to the serious events that Rwanda is experiencing today.*⁴¹³

The ambassador's report goes on to explain the frameworks of Tutsi domination and feudal rule "which had put the Bahutu in servitude" although the latter could become Tutsi through merit and marriage. "Colonization [...] fixed this ethnic division."⁴¹⁴ After the Second World War, the "alliance between the old aristocracy and the colonizer" was broken.⁴¹⁵ Independence puts the Hutu in power and forces the Tutsi into exile or into submission. There followed two republics, the first governed by "the Gitarama clan"⁴¹⁶ from the south of the country. A coup d'état took place in 1973 in favor of the Hutu

from the north. In the eyes of the ambassador, the two regimes had the same defects: “regionalism, corruption, favoritism.”⁴¹⁷ In addition, the divisions are multiple: “Thus, the national unity of Rwanda has not only come up against the confrontation between the Hutus and the Tutsi, but also between the Hutus of the North and the South. To these weaknesses must be added “the unsatisfactory infrastructure, the fragile food self-sufficiency as well as the drop in the price of raw materials.”

The ambassador continues his analysis of the situation.⁴¹⁸ He recalls the existence of “a clandestine opposition and attacks orchestrated outside by Tutsi emigrants in Belgium and Germany” but, while he believes that social movements were foreseeable, “it did not seem to be imagined that emigrants from outside could one day organize military action against the regime in place.” The war “unleashed by the RPF” thus “dramatized the problem of national unity,” “gave Franco-Rwandan relations a very special dimension,” influenced Rwanda’s relations with other Western and African countries, and, finally, worsened the economy by accentuating the need for international aid.

The chapter on political developments looks at the situation before 1 October 1990. At that time, the ambassador writes, there was a presidential regime, with a single party, a CND (parliament) renewed in December 1988, and a president, Habyarimana, who was re-elected with 98% of the votes, while no opposition was tolerated. However, the ambassador remained very positive about the general evolution of the Rwandan political system, even before the La Baule speech.

2.5.3.2 FROM OCTOBER 1990: MILITARY SUPPORT VERSUS DEMOCRATIZATION, BUT STRONG PRESSURE FROM RWANDA

In October 1990, this evolution was disrupted: “The RPF carefully prepared its political program, trying to conceal the predominance of Tutsi within this movement, and referring to the existence, both inside and outside the country, of a popular revolt against the abuses of the regime in place.”⁴¹⁹ On 4 October, a French military intervention coordinated with that of Belgium took place in order to ensure, wrote the ambassador, the safety of their nationals. It had a dissuasive effect on the rebellion: “But it quickly became apparent that, on the military level, the Rwandan government would not be able to get out

of the situation on its own.”⁴²⁰ This led to a military intervention. In terms of this analysis, it can be observed that the French military intervention in Rwanda is in line with its African policy:

*Thus, we were led to make a choice in Rwanda that was consistent with our overall African policy and to commit ourselves much more than other Western countries, including Belgium, which was too entangled in its domestic problems to fully face its responsibilities as a former colonizer.*⁴²¹

France’s military support, however, will come at a price: the democratization of the regime. The above analysis, the ambassador continued, led to the decision to maintain the French military presence, but it was accompanied by precise requirements in terms of democratization. This is what he calls “a policy of conditional support.” This conditional support took the form, over the course of the following year, of strong and continuous pressure on President Habyarimana, who seemed to have no other solution than to submit to the demands of his French ally and Western donors. The pressure was exerted during meetings in Paris between President Habyarimana and President Mitterrand and during the very frequent meetings with Ambassador Martres, who testified to this.

From the beginning, France’s friendly support for democratization in Rwanda was expressed by the French president himself and his son, Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, Africa advisor. As for the new constitutional arrangements in Rwanda, they were prepared with the discreet advice of the ambassador.

*France’s position was expressed to President Habyarimana by Mr. Jacques Pelletier and Mr. Jean-Christophe Mitterrand on November 9, 1990, during an official trip to Rwanda: the Rwandan head of State had to confirm his availability, not only to facilitate the return of émigrés but also to accentuate the domestic political opening. It is no coincidence that four days later, on November 13, 1990, in a statement on which he had previously discreetly consulted the French embassy, President Habyarimana announced the acceleration of the pace of the work of the National Synthesis Commission established in September 1990.*⁴²²

Thus guided on the road to democratization, the Rwandan president announced in 1991 that a draft charter providing for a multiparty system would be prepared and submitted to a referendum. He also announced the abolition of the “ethnic” identity card, a measure which the ambassador said

would be postponed for financial reasons. The detainees arrested at the beginning of October, who are mainly Tutsi, should also be released gradually.

Georges Martres continues: "Throughout 1991, the Western community, and France in particular, will not cease to encourage Rwanda to accentuate the process of democratization to which it has committed itself."⁴²³

It is a policy of give and take. François Mitterrand sent a clear message to President Habyarimana on 2 February, 1991: no military aid without democratization. It was necessary to act "to encourage him to negotiate with the RPF, to respect human rights and to participate in a conference on refugees, while at the same time accentuating the process of domestic political openness. Only at this price will French military aid be continued."⁴²⁴

The Rwandan president's trips to Paris became an opportunity to take stock, as the ambassador recalled: "When the president goes to France and Belgium in April 1991 (he meets President Mitterrand on 23 April), he will present his interlocutors with a completely satisfactory record of democratization."⁴²⁵ The new Rwandan constitution of 10 June 1991 was inspired by the French model. On 1 July the law on political parties (nine parties) was adopted. However, according to the ambassador, there were tensions.

The year 1992 saw another important step in the negotiation process conducted with the help of the Church and Western embassies for power sharing and the formation of a transitional government. The French military presence was conditional on these negotiations. "I worked hard," wrote Georges Martres, "to convince President Habyarimana that this presence, along with our active cooperation with the Rwandan army, could only be maintained if it was justified by the existence in Kigali of a coalition government representing the main trends in opinion."⁴²⁶

The ambassador seems optimistic. After the multiparty system, it is necessary

to work on peace: “The formation of the Government of National Unity will make it possible, with the help of Western observers, to seriously relaunch negotiations with the RPF, all the more seriously since the opposition parties have always affirmed that they would be able to make themselves heard by the rebels.” The opposition parties are the key to negotiation, but peace is the key to maintaining the democratic process: “Nothing is possible if we do not succeed in putting an end to the armed conflict.”⁴²⁷

2.5.3.3 RWANDA: A COUNTRY IN THE FIELD LIKE ANY OTHER?

Ambassador Martres continued his report by addressing the economic situation and then cooperation with France. The latter is Rwanda’s privileged political partner, even if the Rwandan authorities sometimes threaten to seek other protectors. The ambassador recounts that on the night of 7 to 8 October, 1990, Juvénal Habyarimana told him: “If France chooses Museveni, it must tell us.” In reality, the French authorities think of cooperation with Rwanda in terms of their actions in Africa:

*The attitude of our government in the days that followed was clear. Rwanda was treated as Senegal or the Ivory Coast would have been in a similar case. Kigali has normally taken its place on a political, economic, military and cultural axis that runs from Dakar to Djibouti and on which France’s African policy has been based for the past 30 years [...] [These] constant efforts in favor of the development of the rule of law, democratic openness and national reconciliation.*⁴²⁸

This was the theme of the meetings with the French authorities (Jacques Pelletier and Jean-Christophe Mitterrand in Kigali on 9 November, 1990; Juvénal Habyarimana and François Mitterrand in Paris on 23 April, 1991 and 17 July, 1992). The ambassador then moves on to civilian cooperation, which seems to mobilize a respectable number of agents and does not pose any specific problems.⁴²⁹

How does he view military cooperation? Its development testifies to its growing importance. In 1989, the Mission of Military Assistance (MAM, *Mission d’assistance militaire*) had nineteen officers and non-commissioned officers (assistance to the gendarmerie and to the army and air force); with the war came the “problem of maintaining, then extending our cooperation.” This was based on ambiguities,

including the conditions of France's decisive commitment on 4 October, 1990, which was based on false impressions and even - but the ambassador was too diplomatic to say so - on manipulation. He discreetly recalls in passing that his defense attaché had not been fooled and that it was from Paris that the order came to intervene strongly.⁴³⁰ This technical support, the ambassador notes, proved decisive because the Rwandan army was "not very effective and poorly organized." He credited French military cooperation with the only success of the FAR, on 4 October, with the destruction of a column of ten RPF supply trucks: "This success is largely due to the training and advice given by our assistants."

Returning to the events of October 1990, he presents them in a slightly new light. It should be considered," he wrote, "that what happened was a false attack on Kigali" during the night of 4-5 October, even if the "impression remained at the time that the capital remained in danger."

Thereafter, throughout 1991, the RPF, engaged in a "guerrilla war," constantly showed a "tactical thinking superior to that of the Rwandan army." The result was an inflation of French troops. By 31 December, 1992, French military technical assistance had risen to 89 officers and non-commissioned officers, "progressively covering new sectors according to the shortcomings observed in the Rwandan army." A key moment was the creation of a DAMI after the RPF took Ruhengeri for a day on 27 January, 1991. In fact, the ambassador repeats arguments often heard in the mouths of high-ranking Rwandan soldiers: it would have been necessary to bomb the RPF bases in Rwanda, and France did not want to take this diplomatic risk:

But this increased technical assistance, even if it allowed the Rwandan army to hold the border, would not prevent it from continuing to crumble. To reverse the course of events, it would have been necessary to strike blows at the adversary in the Ugandan sanctuary, notably by counter-battery fire, each time the FAR were bombed from the other side of the border. Without taking the diplomatic risk of this escalation, we could not prevent the situation from deteriorating.⁴³¹

The ambassador's account then turns to 1992. The RPF gained a foothold in a small portion of the territory. In June,

negotiations began, but also a “powerful offensive towards Byumba [...] The RPF breakthrough justified sending a second company to reinforce the Noroît detachment. It also led us to support the Rwandan army with artillery resources and to accompany this support with a DAMI from the 35th REP.⁴³² This helped to “stabilize the front and convince the RPF of our desire to prevent it from reaching Kigali.”⁴³³ Military assistance, he wrote, was a factor in the RPF’s decision to respect the cease-fire from 1 August. By the end of 1992, military cooperation was significant.⁴³⁴

Ambassador Martres concludes with a presentation of the French community and its ability to evacuate quickly in the event of a crisis. From 700 people in 1989, it had gone to about 600 by the end of 1992. The Embassy’s staff is too small in case of a crisis. If there was no disaster in October 1990, it was “thanks to the assistance of the MAM,” then because of the reinforcement of the staff and thanks to the effective liaison between the post and the Noroît detachment. October 1990 also shows “the lack of a precise and coordinated policy for the evacuation of French nationals.” “In total, 245 French and 213 foreigners were evacuated by French planes,” plus 26 French nationals on a regular Sabena flight.⁴³⁵ Some of them returned in early 1991. On the other hand, it can be noted that there were no other evacuations in 1991 and 1992, but withdrawals from Gisenyi, Ruhengeri and Byumba to Kigali.⁴³⁶ Finally, the ambassador emphasizes that “on the whole, the French population was never directly threatened.”⁴³⁷

The period 1991-1992 was marked by two major crises: the first at the end of January and beginning of February 1991, the second in June 1992. The characteristics of these crises were similar: massacres of Tutsi populations by Hutu extremists that followed RPF attacks; permanent French support for the Rwandan armed forces.

Two structuring facts emerge: the very great weakness of the Rwandan army in combat and a more important and complex French support. The latter took the form of sending equipment (notably a 105 mm battery) as well as men to support the Rwandan army (installation of a DAMI and an advisor to the FAR General Staff, assistance in fortifying the border in October 1992). Financial support

was also provided in the spring of 1991. Far from being able to disengage, as it had planned at the end of 1990, France became a major supporter of Habyarimana's government. Its objective was to accompany the democratization of a regime, whose military collapse it feared in the face of the RPF, while helping to facilitate negotiations between the parties, notably in Paris in October 1991, and then in Arusha from the summer of 1992. In this tension between democratization and negotiations against a backdrop of war, the report by the defense attaché Galinié (June 1991) on the "Second Republic," a circle of high-ranking Rwandan dignitaries who were allegedly behind the massacres, was given little consideration.

The French military engagement in Rwanda was the result of complex arbitrations, between, on the one hand, a French political will marked by tensions between various institutions (MMC, EMA, EMP), and on the other hand, repeated and sometimes divergent requests from President Habyarimana and the Rwandan government. It evolves according to the crises and the balance of power between the actors. Although the broad outlines of a political agreement were drawn up in Arusha at the end of 1992, the most thorny issue remained: the composition of the new Rwandan army in which the RPA and the FAR would merge. This is a major point of tension between the two camps, each of which has significant international support: France for the Rwandan government, Uganda and the United States for the RPF.

Chapter 3

Towards Disengagement (January-December 1993)

The year 1993 could once again have led to a transformation of the political choices made by France in Rwanda. Instead, it was marked by continuity. The events of January and February led to a new French military intervention on an unprecedented scale, justified by the conviction that the Arusha negotiation process could lead to a solution acceptable to both parties and that it was therefore necessary to strengthen the Rwandan State against the RPF. Reports of human rights violations are not enough to shake support for President Habyarimana's regime.

However, voices were raised to challenge this policy, with Defense Minister Pierre Joxe at the forefront. Convinced since his arrival at his post that France was on the wrong track in Rwanda, he confronted President François Mitterrand directly, in a core cabinet meeting, on this subject, initially winning his case. On 9 March, he was no longer minister. A month later, the socialist party loses the elections: Edouard Balladur becomes Prime Minister and François Léotard, Minister of Defense.

The cohabitation did not immediately mark a radical change of policy in Rwanda. France chose to accompany the Arusha negotiations to their conclusion and to maintain a military presence until the arrival of the Blue Helmets, a move that was interpreted as a desire to protect President Habyarimana and his entourage. In the entourage of the President of the Republic, the analyses describing the rise of the danger represented by the Hutu Power extremists gathered around the president were not sufficiently taken into account. It was preferred to rely on the effectiveness of the two "barriers" represented by the Belgian Blue Helmets responsible for ensuring the country's security and by President Habyarimana, who was thought to be able to

control his supporters and maintain the country's political unity. In April 1994, both of these barriers were broken at the same time.

The following chapter is based essentially on three archival collections, which substantiate its interest and its limits. First, the archives of the *Service historique de la Défense* contain the collection of the Employment Office of the General Staff. This collection also includes a large amount of documentation: a collection of TD Kigali, messages and reports from the defense attaché in Kigali, minutes of meetings and in particular crisis meetings held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, without this being systematic. The cross-referencing of fonds and attention to “furtive traces” (evidence of “short circuits,” direct calls, recommendations, scribbled comments on “post-it notes”) testify to intentional deviations from the regulatory forms of public action, discreet and slight enough that they do not lead to a systematic deviation of institutions, but numerous and repeated enough to be significant. They lead to a hardening of a policy in very complex terrain, increasingly under the control of the presidency of the Republic.

The second set of documents that is important to this chapter comes from the presidential collection. The minutes of the core cabinet meetings and the preparatory memos of the advisors show how decisions are made at the Élysée. On the other hand, it is very difficult to understand whether the conception of policy in Rwanda changed with the arrival of Edouard Balladur as Prime Minister. For 1993, the files of Édouard Balladur's cabinet are indeed scanty and the archives of François Léotard, Alain Juppé and Michel Roussin are unavailable since access to a coherent series of documents from their cabinets has not been possible.

Since the archives of the EMP have been well preserved and generously communicated, they risked skewing the analysis. The cross-referencing of sources and the scope of the collected documentation seem to have mitigated this risk.

The archives do not lead to any plaudits for the policy conducted by France in Rwanda in 1993. On the contrary, this year is characterized by a fundamental failure of this policy: the establishment of a growing divide between a diplomatic effort turned towards peace associated with power sharing among Rwandans, and the proven disintegration of the frameworks of Rwandan political life.

3.1 THE FEBRUARY 1993 CRISIS AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Contrary to his expectations, the ambassador did not leave Kigali in December 1992. Two tragic events - the Tutsi massacres of December and January 1993 - finally attracted the attention of the international community. The RPF crossed the border to stop the abuses against the Tutsi in the Ruhengeri region. Once again, France was called upon to intervene in an emergency. This new Rwandan crisis and the French reaction were the occasion for one of the few and most important debates in France on its policy in Rwanda. Indeed, if the urgency of the situation did not lead to in-depth discussions on the principle of French support, it was during the reflection on the means that should be implemented that a discussion opened at the highest level of the executive branch. The Minister of Defense, Pierre Joxe, was one of the few voices of dissent at the time when it came to the decision to provide military support to Rwanda.

3.1.1 A hasty intervention: reacting, but why?

After the massacres perpetrated by the MRND and CDR militias in the east of the country, RPF troops crossed the Ugandan-Rwandan border on 5 February 1993. President Habyarimana immediately asked France for help.

The archives relating to François Mitterrand's decision to reinforce the French military presence in Rwanda and to support the Rwandan government once again show that this decision was taken in a very short time. This haste, mingled with astonishment at the speed of progress of the Rwandan president's opponents, was based on two assumptions: the offensive was both "RPF-Uganda" and "Ugandan-Tutsi," and on the observation that the "rebels" were in a position to take power.

On 8 February, 1993, the French ambassador in Kigali, Georges Martres, informed his department of a telephone call received the same day, at 2 p.m., from President Juvénal Habyarimana. After presenting the dramatic nature of the military situation, Habyarimana insisted on the presence of NRA regiments

alongside RPF soldiers and transmitted his demands¹: a second 105 mm battery, the dispatch of 50 12.7 mm machine guns and 100,000 rounds of ammunition, and air intervention on the invaders' armored vehicles if they crossed the border at Cyanika.² Georges Martres concluded: "Among these requests, in the opinion of our technical assistance, machine guns are a priority, to which could be added 2,000 120 mm mortar shells and 500 68 HE rockets for helicopters."³ Juvénal Habyarimana tried to convince French decision-makers that the RPF offensive was supported by Uganda, in order to validate the thesis that it was an external aggression by a sovereign country against another sovereign country. At the same time, President Habyarimana called the Élysée Palace directly. Dominique Pin, under cover of Hubert Védrine, mentioned this in a memo addressed to François Mitterrand:

President Habyarimana called you this morning. According to him, 5 battalions of the Ugandan army (NRA) are currently fighting in Rwanda alongside the RPF and reinforcements are constantly arriving from Uganda. He asked us for a quick intervention of French troops to stop the rebel offensive and prevent the RPF from taking Kigali.⁴

The President of the Republic simply commented: "Seen."⁵ On the Matignon side, Pierre Bérégovoy received a memo from Colonel Lasserre, deputy head of the Prime Minister's military cabinet, also dated 8 February, 1993, warning him that a French company was on alert and ready to intervene.⁶ However, the document is nothing more than an information memo,⁷ the decision making, in fact, lies in the hands of the President of the Republic. On the same day, the President presided over a "Rwanda emergency unit," the verbatim records of which are preserved in the archives of Prime Minister Pierre Bérégovoy, to whom his advisor, Jacques Maire, sent them only on 19 February, 1993, still for information.⁸ In addition to Jacques Maire, the author of these verbatims, the participants we can identify are the President of the Republic and the head of the EMP for the Élysée, the director of African and Malagasy Affairs, Jean-Marc de La Sablière, and Daniel Bernard, spokesman and chief of staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a representative of the Ministry of Defense and another of the Ministry of Cooperation and Development, as well

as Ambassador Georges Martres by telephone.⁹ Two antagonistic opinions emerge in these transcribed exchanges. On the one hand, the Ministry of Defense believes that there is no danger to Kigali, but this opinion is clearly isolated. On the other hand, all the other participants believe that the RPF, supported by Museveni whose past actions would serve as an example, can “push its advantage” and take the step that separates it from taking power by force. This fear is reinforced by questions about the attitude he intends to adopt towards the French and European population in the conquered territories on the one hand, and more broadly towards that of Kigali once he has succeeded. Jacques Maire summarized these exchanges in an information memo addressed to the Prime Minister, emphasizing that “we still wonder today about the reasons for this offensive: to strengthen the RPF’s hand in the Arusha negotiations; to push its advantage on the ground as far as possible?”¹⁰ However, this question leads to a clearer conclusion:

The Arusha negotiations are compromised.

French reactions: Without prejudging the continuation of the conflict, we must avoid the fall of Kigali, which would create a serious political precedent, lead to massacres among the civilian population, and make the evacuation of European nationals difficult.

The position of the President of the Republic does not seem to be changing: the RPF must not seize power by force and we will not contribute to this objective by any indirect means, with the exception of an engagement of our troops.¹¹

While the Prime Minister’s advisor had some questions, his conclusions were quite clear and explicitly aligned with the position of the Élysée, as presented by the EMP on the same day.¹² Also on 8 February, a new memo was signed jointly by the Elysée’s Africa advisor, Bruno Delaye, and the head of the EMP; General Quesnot again mentioned a similar version of the facts

It is confirmed that the RPF launched a generalized offensive on the North from its Ugandan bases and probably also via Zaire. Rubengeri is being fought over, the Rwandan army has committed all its reserves. A crisis meeting was held late this morning at the Quai d’Orsay. The following arrangements are submitted for your approval:

On the diplomatic level, a reminder of our support for the Arusha process and condemnation of this unilateral breach of the cease-fire (statement by

the spokesperson of the Quai d'Orsay). Warning from Museveni (President of Uganda): M. Dumas should contact him by telephone.

On the military level, we are reinforcing our support to the Rwandan army, excluding any direct participation of French forces in the confrontations; deliveries of ammunition and equipment: technical assistance, particularly in artillery. A company was put on alert at six o'clock in the morning in case the security of the French community required its intervention.¹³

François Mitterrand finally approved this interpretation with a handwritten note on the document, framing the last word: “Okay Urgent.”¹⁴

Information therefore circulated quickly between Kigali and Paris, and decisions were made immediately. They were based, at the time, not so much on information from the field as on the version of the President of Rwanda. Thus, Christian Quesnot signed the first decision in which he passed on this version when he mentioned that the attack was “from RPF bases in Uganda.” Later, a DRM memo saw the use of 122mm artillery as a sign of NRA support for the RPF, which could not operate without this Ugandan support.¹⁵ General Quesnot’s memos, as well as those produced by the Prime Minister’s office, reveal a sense of urgency for a French reaction, an urgency that is also acknowledged in François Mitterrand’s handwritten commentary. One also notes the extremely short time during which the decision was taken. Outside the close circle of François Mitterrand, there is mention of a “crisis meeting” at the Quai d’Orsay. Matignon, for its part, was simply “informed” of the dispatch of a French company to Rwanda that same evening at 10 p.m.¹⁶

3.1.2 Rwanda faces military and political breakdown

The French government was alarmed because the RPF was close to seizing power. Faced with it, the Rwandan government was unable to unite to galvanize its troops and organize its defense.

On 10 February, 1993, a memo sent to Pierre Bérégovoy by Jacques Maire noted the worsening of the threat: “The RPF’s military operation is proving to be more important than expected; the action of the Rwandan armed forces to liberate Ruhengeri has not yielded the expected

results; the Noroît company is therefore unable to go to Ruhengeri to retrieve the French.”¹⁷ On 13 February, 1993, General Christian Quesnot informed François Mitterrand that the Rwandan army was in fact in danger of being swept away militarily, while hinting at the link between RPF forces and Uganda.¹⁸ This threat was confirmed two days later by Bruno Delaye, the President’s Africa advisor, who returned from a visit to Kigali and Kampala on 12 and 13 February, 1993, to assess the situation. He, too, indicated the serious threat posed by the RPF to the continued rule of Juvénal Habyarimana.¹⁹ On 18 February, 1993, Jacques Maire attended a new crisis unit and reported the analysis of the Ministry of Defense according to which the “FAR are concentrating their efforts on the Kigali access routes. Strategy exists, leads to loss of NE sector. The FAR are plugging the gaps. The initiative belongs to the RPF, which, with additional effort, can get much closer to Kigali.”²⁰ For their part, Christian Quesnot and Dominique Pin alerted the President on 19 February that “the military situation remains very worrying. President Habyarimana called this morning. He believes that [...] the Rwandan forces will not be able to hold out for long on the current lines near Kigali.”²¹ On the same day, Dominique Pin informed François Mitterrand that, “from a military point of view [...] the Rwandan armed forces do not seem to be in a position to stop the troops of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) if they decide to take Kigali.”²² On 24 February, 1993, he repeated, in a memo signed jointly with Christian Quesnot upon returning from a core cabinet meeting: “The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), with the help of Ugandan President Museveni, is on the verge of obtaining a political and military victory in Rwanda.”²³ Matignon was also informed of the situation and the imminent threat posed by the RPF. A memo from Jean-Marc de La Sablière indicated that, on the military level, “the situation is worrying” and that “the Rwandan army, despite the support in ammunition and advice that we are giving it, is fighting in a very uneven manner and is not in a position to adopt anything other than a defensive attitude.” The RPF is located 25 km from Kigali,²⁴ the breakdown of the Rwandan army is complete.

An aggravating factor is that the Rwandan authorities are more disunited than ever; this is the diagnosis of a document drawn up at the Ministry of Defense on the various points of the international situation

in preparation for the cabinet meeting of 26 January, 1993.

The situation has become extremely delicate. The head of State, wanting to rebalance the Arusha talks to his advantage, wanted to place his Minister of Defense, Mr. Gasana (a moderate from the MRND), at the head of the delegation, who was also afraid of finding himself at odds.

The Prime Minister rejects this proposal but says he is prepared to replace the current head of the delegation with another member of his party. If the leaders in Kigali do not agree to resume negotiations this week under conditions acceptable to all, the RPF, which is currently gaining supporters among the displaced peasants, may not rule out the possibility of a coup de force.²⁵

Bruno Delaye confirmed this on his return from his mission with Jean-Marc de La Sablière to Kigali and Kampala on 12 and 13 February. For President Habyarimana, “it is better to die than to be subjugated by the Tutsi,”²⁶ while his Prime Minister, Dismas Nsengiyaremye, wanted to continue negotiations with the RPF “in order to eventually drive President Habyarimana from power.”²⁷ Noting these fractures, Bruno Delaye is pessimistic.²⁸ General Quesnot agrees, clearly relying on his colleague’s report.²⁹ This information paints a picture of a government undermined by internal opposition and threatened in its survival by a relentless military offensive, even if the general notes that “Mr Bruno Delaye and Mr Rochereau de La Sablière worked on the evening of Friday 12 February to bring the President and the Prime Minister closer together, in the hope that a joint communiqué would be published today.”³⁰

3.1.3 Minimizing anti-Tutsi violence, denouncing RPF killings

3.1.3.1 THE AMBIGUITY OF FRENCH INFORMATION AND REACTION TO THE TENSIONS AND RACIAL VIOLENCE IN RWANDA

Once again, we find the idea of an “Ugandan-Tutsi” offensive. There are few references in the Élysée archives to other possible motives for the RPF offensive, except when it comes to emphasizing that it was driven by Uganda. As early as 6 January, 1993, the French ambassador in Washington, Jacques Andréani, echoed the concerns of his State Department interlocutors.³¹ This diplomatic telegram

shows that, on the other side of the Atlantic, there is no room for optimism about the peaceful acceptance of these provisions by the authorities and the extremists. The risks of a violent reaction were also perceived quite precisely by the Africa advisor, Bruno Delaye, and his deputy, Dominique Pin, who wrote a memo on 14 January, 1993, about the Arusha protocol of 10 January:

*The President has the impression that he has been cheated and that his ouster is being prepared. He may reject the agreement made at Arusha. All of this augurs for new troubles in Rwanda, particularly those caused by Hutu extremists. We are waiting for our ambassador to give us a more precise evaluation of the reactions of the population and the army to this Arusha agreement.*³²

On the document, François Mitterrand gives a handwritten directive, “*Deal directly with Habyarimana.*”³³ Another memo, dated 18 January, 1993, informs the President of the Republic that Juvénal Habyarimana intends to stop over in Paris on his way back from his trip to the United States and that he “would like you to receive him, if possible.”³⁴ In Kigali, on January 19, MRND and CDR militants brought violence to the streets during a demonstration, and the presidential party rejected the agreement on 21 January, 1993. This was the start of a new series of demonstrations in the capital and in several prefectures of Rwanda; they turned into massacres of Tutsi in the prefectures of Gisenyi, Ruhengeri, in the area of Bumbogo and Buliza near Kigali, in the commune of Tumba near Byumba and in that of Rutsiro near Kibuye. These facts are reported in the preparatory file for the cabinet meeting of 27 January, 1993, in a document from the Ministry of Defense for the attention of the Prime Minister, Pierre Bérégovoy, concerning the various important points to be discussed on the international situation.³⁵

On 5 February, 1993, the French ambassador in Kigali, Georges Martres, sent a series of diplomatic telegrams on the situation in Gisenyi “after the inter-ethnic massacres,” according to its subject line:

The massacres had indeed been organized. The instigators of the CDR (Hutu extremists) and the MRND/Interahamwe had no difficulty in reawakening the old resentments that exist between the two ethnic groups, especially since Hutu peasants were invited to increase their livestock or their land in this way. This use of ethnic quarrels for political purposes is not

*new in Rwanda. It has been regularly practiced since independence both by the supporters of the President of the First Republic (President Kayibanda's MDR Parmehutu) and by those of President Habyarimana. The local authorities have been, with a few exceptions, deficient or complicit. Many burgomasters adopted a passive attitude so as not to alienate their constituents. It is true that some attacks have grouped two or three thousand assailants covered with foliage to avoid being identified. To intervene in these conditions supposed a certain courage. Some burgomasters had it and did not hesitate to risk their lives. The attitude of the gendarmerie was more encouraging, except for a few discordant notes. All of the testimonies collected agreed that the gendarmerie did its job properly, bringing calm each time it intervened.*³⁶

Georges Martres speaks of “inter-ethnic massacres” in the title of his telegram. However, the designated targets are specifically Tutsi or Hutu from the South. As for the masterminds and organizers, they are named: the local authorities, the militants of the presidential party, the extremists of the CDR and the militia. Nevertheless, the ambassador insists but not on what this reveals about the policy implemented by the Rwandan authorities. He certainly mentions the planning orchestrated by the burgomasters and prefects as well as the mobilization by the latter of populations called upon to kill their neighbors out of hatred and personal interest, but he insists rather on the fact that these massacres are part of a long tradition going back at least to the Kayibanda regime. The Gisenyi massacre is thus presented as just another massacre. It is not the human toll that concerns the ambassador but the geopolitical consequences, the “after-effects” of “these massacres, which are numerically less important than those of the past”³⁷: that is to say, on the one hand, the fracture between the populations materialized by the Nyaborongo River, and on the other hand, that the Rwandan government discredits itself and strengthens the RPF, which is what the French want to avoid. Moreover, the effect of this diplomatic telegram on the French authorities should be nuanced. It came after another message in which Georges Martres emphasized the Rwandan government’s desire to punish the guilty parties, implicitly exonerating it of any responsibility.³⁸

The information on the reality and the progress of these massacres reached the Élysée the same day, but this time it was transmitted

to the President of the Republic in a remarkable euphemism: “The distribution of powers that had been the subject of an agreement in January, following the movement of discontent manifested by the presidential camp (80 deaths).”³⁹ Contradictory information reached the Élysée Palace. A particular DGSE file dated 26 February, 1993 must be quoted at length because its conclusions nuance the previous document.⁴⁰ According to the French intelligence service: “[...] if there is no formal proof of Kampala’s assistance to the RPF”⁴¹ it seems that the RPF benefits from a form of Ugandan tolerance. The hesitation to validate the thesis of external aggression concealed by a “rebel” offensive is obvious. This file also informs the Élysée of the motives for the RPF offensive and of the existence of a possible program of “ethnic cleansing” carried out by Hutu extremists, with the support of the Rwandan government, against the Tutsi population:

The risks of such outcomes [the 9 January power-sharing agreements] going awry were borne out: political clashes quickly turned into ethnic massacres in the east of the country, perpetrated by the armed militias of the MRNDD and CDR with the complicity of some local authorities. These massacres took place the day after the departure of a mission of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), which does not hesitate to speak of “ethnic cleansing” and denounces the involvement of the entourage of the head of State, in its report to be made public on 22 February.

These massacres gave the RPF an excellent reason to break the cease-fire and make a show of force on the ground. Despite the government’s concessions on the preconditions for resuming negotiations, the RPF launched a large-scale offensive on 8 February, targeting the Ruhengeri-Kigali and Byumba-Kigali axes in particular. The success of this offensive was due less to the strength of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA-rebel groups), despite Ugandan military aid, than to the weakness and lack of motivation of the Rwandan Armed Forces.⁴²

The same interpretation, that the RPF was reacting to massacres of Tutsi, is present in the Pierre Bérégovoy fonds.⁴³ A memo addressed to the Prime Minister on the same day, summarizing the meetings, reiterates that “The RPF explained its action by the desire to put an end to the abuses committed among the Rwandan civilian population”⁴⁴ while regretting that “RFI and *Libération* only relayed this aspect of things.”⁴⁵

This information also arrives through other channels. Thus, in response to a letter received from Jean Auroux dated 18 February, 1993, the historian specializing in the Great Lakes region, Jean-Pierre Chrétien, sent a long letter detailing the violence, not only for the month of January 1993, but since the French intervention of October 1990. The deputy and president of the Socialist group in the National Assembly sent Jean-Pierre Chrétien's reply to the Élysée Palace:

Since October 1990 the Tutsi minority still living in the interior of the country and also (what is too often forgotten) the democrats or simply the people from the center and the south, treated as "accomplices" of the "cockroaches" (nickname given to the RPF rebels), have been victims of a series of violence, assassinations and pogroms, the course of which is always the same. Militants of the Habyarimana movement [...] program, provoke and carry out these killings with the complicity of certain local authorities and soldiers. And then the French, the naïve or cynical Europeans who did not follow (or pretended not to follow) the murderous propaganda developed in Kinyarwanda, were led to believe that these were simple outbreaks of "popular anger" by "Hutu afraid of the return of the Tutsi feudalists." Each of these waves of violence was, as if by chance, triggered at a crucial moment in the democratization process and the Arusha negotiations [...]. But what did France officially do in the face of this deterioration? Paris expressed its "concern" and hoped, without denouncing anything, that reason would prevail. It took a year for the genocide of the Bagogwe cattle-herders [...] to become known. So, neither the French "instructors" nor the French ambassador had heard of anything? On the contrary, Paris denounced within 24 hours "massacres of civilians" committed by the RPF during its recent February attack, including massacres that, according to independent sources, have already turned out to be calculated inventions of Rwandan military propaganda. It will be hard to prevent anyone from seeing this as a double standard.⁴⁶

The expression "genocide of the Bagogwe cattle-herders" is based on the conclusions of the report of the International Commission of Investigation published at the same time, which questioned the possibility that the massacre of these cattle-herders in January 1991 could be considered genocide.

3.1.3.2 THE REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF INVESTIGATION

This investigation report has a history. Under the "1503 procedure" in force at the time, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights

can be seized of situations that appear to reveal the existence of flagrant and systematic violations of human rights. This procedure is characterized by a principle of confidentiality that is supposed to encourage the cooperation of the state concerned. Following the session held in Geneva in August 1992, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities decided to refer the case of Rwanda to the Commission. The Sub-Commission had not received any response from the Rwandan government following the denunciation of serious human rights violations addressed to the UN by the Committee for Human Rights and Democracy in Rwanda (torture and executions of Tutsi, massacres of the Bagogwe which “had the scope of genocide,” political prisoners, etc.).⁴⁷ The case was examined at the end of January 1993 by the Working Group on Situations, the competent body of the Commission. It urged Rwanda to submit its observations. The document found in the diplomatic archives bears a handwritten note addressed to Brigitte Collet of the Directorate of the United Nations and International Organizations, sounding the alarm: “Watch out for Rwanda.”⁴⁸

France’s concern to avoid too explicit a condemnation of the Habyarimana regime by UN bodies is thus palpable. At the end of February, B. Miyet noted that the recommendation of the working group to keep the situation in Rwanda under review would probably be followed by the Commission on Human Rights. “It seems difficult to obtain a more moderate text, insofar as this country has not sent a reply.”⁴⁹ France’s insistence paid off, however: three days later, the Commission published the observations submitted by the Rwandan government. It asked the Commission to excuse Rwanda’s silence, which was justified by the period of war that the country was going through. The government acknowledged that this difficult situation had given rise to human rights violations, but denied that there was “ever a deliberate intention on the part of the Rwandan government to exterminate the Tutsi minority.” On the contrary, efforts have been made to stop human rights violations. In particular, the government has facilitated the work of the International Commission of Investigation.⁵⁰ It asked the Commission on Human Rights to await the publication of the Commission’s report before making any decisions.⁵¹

In February 1993, all of the conclusions of the report reached at least the level of the Africa advisor at the Élysée Palace, but also the desks of several ministers.⁵² However, for Bruno Delaye, it was a “movement of opinion.”⁵³ This is all the more significant because he and Jean Carbonare met, probably on 29 January, and the latter then sent a clear letter to the former,⁵⁴ recalling in particular President Habyarimana’s control over Rwanda and therefore over the violence:

It is unthinkable, given the functioning of the state apparatus in which one man organizes and manages all of the real power, that what is happening today in Rwanda escapes his authority and therefore his responsibility. The head of State has at his disposal his Presidential Guard, the famous PG, which already makes one tremble when its name is uttered [...]

1/ It seems to me very important to emphasize the impunity of the perpetrators of the abuses committed: how can this impunity be explained, if not by the protection they enjoy within the framework of a system developed at a high level.

2/ It is also significant that the head of State does not call for calm or reconciliation. This silence is significant [...].⁵⁵

The letter was communicated on 8 March, 1993 to Jean-Marc de La Sablière, Georges Martres and General Quesnot.⁵⁶ On the other hand, in the absence of the Mitterrandian “seen,” it is possible to conclude that this document did not reach his office.

The reception of the report and the discussions it generated between the Ministry of Cooperation and Development on the one hand and the EMP on the other must be mentioned. Marcel Debarge and his office received a copy of the press release issued by the International Commission of Investigation into Human Rights Violations Committed since 1 October 1990, which emphasized that in Rwanda “the crime of genocide, perpetrated with the participation of State agents and military personnel, targeted the Tutsi ethnic group,” and that the civilian population was a victim of war crimes: “It has been established that rapes were committed by members of the Rwandan army.”⁵⁷ The Minister and his office also received a copy of a statement from Rwandan and international NGOs working for development and human rights in Rwanda, dated 28 January, 1993, which reported that during one of these massacres, the victims were chosen because

they were identified as Tutsi following the verification of their identity cards.⁵⁸ Finally, a handwritten letter from Jean Carbonare, addressed to the Minister and dated 24 February, 1993, is kept in the same fonds; if he addresses him, it is because the Minister has “this capacity to listen and understand in order to change things,” while offering his services.⁵⁹ A second letter arrived on the Minister’s desk, dated 1 March, 1993. Jean Carbonare describes the situation precisely: “The Rwandan government has massacred and had massacred a considerable number of its own citizens. Most of the victims were Tutsi, even if the number of Hutu had been increasing for months because they were members of opposition parties”⁶⁰ and according to him, the involvement of some of the “high ranking” authorities is certain. Bruno Delaye, in a memo addressed to the President of the Republic, knowingly uses euphemisms when he mentions only “unfortunate abuses.”⁶¹

3.1.3.3 SPEECHES IN DEFENSE OF THE RWANDAN REGIME TO THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT

Is Marcel Debarge sensitive to the facts presented by Jean Carbonare? At the same time, General Huchon sent him, under the handwritten title: “Massacres of Ruhengeri by the RPF (8 February, 1993),” a collection of 17 color photographs of bodies of men and women presented as victims of massacres perpetrated by the RPF. Each of these photographs is accompanied by handwritten comments from the sender.⁶² The first two photographs are captioned as follows: “Four men among some forty civilians from Gikombe (south of Ruhengeri) coldly executed by the RPF.”⁶³ The fact that these photographs of victims of a massacre appear in an “EMP” file suggests that they reached the Élysée Palace. Even though the reality of the massacre is indisputable, this EMP file does not provide any overall context, time or place, and the authors of these photographs are not cited. The close-ups let us guess the extreme violence and the comments insist on the horror of the event. The purpose of these documents is undoubtedly to persuade the viewer of the RPF’s desire for extermination, to which the deaths of its enemies are attributed, and consequently of the need to support Habyarimana. The tone of the comments contrasts with

that accompanying the photographs of dead RPF soldiers in the second bundle. The title of this one does not mention massacres or violence, but “Information on the RPF (equipment).”⁶⁴ General Huchon notes, in reference to a corpse, that “the RPF uses special food for those suffering from dehydration marked UNICEF”⁶⁵ and, in handwriting, “humanitarian aid is diverted by the Ugandan services to equip Ugandan-RPF battalions.”⁶⁶ The emphasis is placed on the clothing of the corpses;⁶⁷ these details are not accidental, they make it possible to insist on the ability to conceal oneself and to pass through the lines of the FAR and thus to threaten, surreptitiously, the security of Kigali. General Huchon’s enterprise continues in the third bundle, where a copy of the DFRA Geneva 491 on the displacement of the population is included with a new comment: “I am sending it to you, because the declarations of the ICRC seem to me to need to be brought to the attention of Mr. Debarge.”⁶⁸ This TD is accompanied by a map of Rwanda and a copy of a report on “the capture by the Rwandan army of a vehicle belonging to the Ugandan army and used in Rwanda by the RPF” with a handwritten comment: “Concrete case of Ugandan logistical support to the RPF.”⁶⁹ The entire file was thus transmitted by the President of the Republic’s deputy Chief of Staff to the Minister of Cooperation just before his departure for Kigali.

Marcel Debarge received another file supporting the reality of the violence perpetrated by RPF troops on 27 February, 1993, which was compiled after investigators from the criminal research and documentation center, accompanied by French technical advisors, visited the camps in the Ruhengeri region.⁷⁰ The Rwandans interviewed refugees selected by the French technical advisors in a camp they had chosen at random. On 2 March, 1993, just after the end of Marcel Debarge’s mission, Colonel Delort announced, in a diplomatic telegram sent from the French embassy in Kigali, new testimonies along the same lines.⁷¹

General Quesnot reported a campaign of “ethnic cleansing” aimed at the “Hutu populations” while emphasizing the support of the Ugandan regime for the RPF in a memo addressed to the President of the Republic, under cover of Hubert Védrine, on 18 February

1993.⁷² On the copy of the document preserved in the EMP archives, one can see a handwritten note signed by Hubert Védrine “Highly reported” and a direct question from the President of the Republic: “What do you advise?”⁷³ The use of the expression “ethnic cleansing” is not insignificant. It is used in the DGSE file mentioned above to describe the anti-Tutsi massacres,⁷⁴ but here it is used by the EMP to denounce the crimes of the RPF. In other words, the Chief of Staff emphasizes the threat that the RPF offensive, which is equated with the Tutsi, poses to the ethnic balance of Rwanda and to the domination of the “majority people.” It is not so much the possibility of a massive displacement of the population that General Quesnot insists on, as the probability of extreme violence of which the Hutu could be victims. To support his memo, he reproduced in an annex a TD from the French embassy in Kigali, also dated 18 February, 1993, in which he mentions the pleas of the Habyarimana couple to put an end to the massacres attributed by them to the RPF.⁷⁵ The president and his wife urge, in a pathetic tone, an urgent intervention in response.

3.2 Reacting, but how?

The background to the French reaction is therefore the claim that the real imminent threat comes from the RPF’s program of “ethnic cleansing” in Rwanda. Such a reading of events forces a reaction and, as is its purpose, extinguishes the fundamental discussions as to the merits of French military action in Rwanda.

The discussion, however, was to resurface within the executive branch during exchanges on the means to be used in Rwanda as part of the French response. The approaches were directed towards diplomatic action, the main issue of which was to overcome the reluctance of the international community to commit itself to supporting France’s Rwandan policy. However, the discussion concerning military support and the degree of commitment will allow the Minister of Defense to reexamine French policy in the light of the consequences of an excessive level of military involvement in Rwanda.

3.2.1 French dissension over the degree of military engagement in Rwanda

The degree of engagement of French companies in Rwanda is seen by all as a reflection of the relationship between France and Rwanda. The awareness of the value of this measurement tool pushed the Rwandan president to ask François Mitterrand for the greatest possible military engagement from the outset. All the actors, both French and Rwandan, remember the French engagement in the summer of 1992 and thus the transition from indirect to semi-direct support, to use the categories used at the time. This matrix of the summer of 1992 weighs on French political thinking. Its repetition, or lack of it, offers an opportunity to link the degree of military engagement and the reflection on the nature of French policy in Rwanda.

3.2.1.1 ASSESSING MILITARY NEEDS FOR RWANDA: HOW MANY MEN SHOULD BE SENT?

From the beginning of the crisis, Bruno Delaye reported that, during their meeting, the President of Rwanda “seemed to be counting on a direct commitment of French troops to defend Kigali.”⁷⁶ This was not the first time that Habyarimana had made this official request. In the file of Pierre Bérégovoy’s cabinet memos, a handwritten mention by Admiral Lecointre can be cited: “the passage to direct strategy (military intervention) has always been ruled out by the President.”⁷⁷ However, the choice between abandoning Habyarimana to his fate or intensifying French support for him was expressed very early on. According to Jacques Maire’s verbatim report, the Élysée Palace asked the question directly during the crisis unit of 9 February 1993: “Either we go beyond the indirect strategy (Jaguar?). Or we change our approach.”⁷⁸ For a brief moment, during the crisis unit of 18 February, 1993, Jacques Maire reported that the option of abandoning Habyarimana to his fate was directly mentioned by Serge Boidevaix, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: “What are our political objectives? Should we take note of the evolution of the situation? Should we give Habyarimana an out? Should we limit ourselves to getting the French out?”⁷⁹ This option, which would act as a radical disengagement of the French, was not discussed further. On the other hand, the protection of Kigali by the French army was still on the table during

the crisis unit of 18 February 1993. The Minister of Defense informed the other participants: “We can protect Kigali with 1,000 men.”⁸⁰ The high number requested may be an attempt to indicate to his interlocutors the cost of such an operation in order to better dissuade them. If this is the case, it only has the opposite effect. Indeed, according to Jacques Maire’s verbatim report, Ambassador Georges Martres declared, presumably on the phone, that “if we want to be more than just a protector of the French, we must exchange the protection of Kigali for a compromise with Habyarimana in Arusha.”⁸¹ Christian Quesnot replied that “pressure on Habyarimana”⁸² could be exerted, but that new compromises in Arusha were unthinkable. According to him, quoted by Jacques Maire, such requests “have already been made. It has only encouraged RPF demands. Ready to propose to the President to place 1,000 men, but not to resume Arusha.”⁸³ The EMP leader finally poses the dilemma as the participants see it: “If we intervene: neo-colonialists. If we do not intervene: responsible for the massacres.”⁸⁴ Jacques Maire summarizes the exchange for the attention of the Prime Minister in a memo dated 19 February 1993:

*The FAR (Rwandan army) is losing ground and is gradually withdrawing in front of the RPF (Tutsi minority). From now on, the access roads to Kigali appear to be very threatened, despite the positioning of the FAR on these roads. We risk an increase in the massacres carried out by the RPF in the zone, and an arrival in Kigali.*⁸⁵

He then summarized the options under consideration:

- Withdraw the French and the “Noroît” soldiers tomorrow.

- Deploy sufficient forces (about 1,000 men) to keep the capital under control and avoid massacres.

To go there opens to criticism from the “anti-colonialists,” but proves our determination in the eyes of Uganda, behind the RPF.

Not to go would make us responsible for future massacres and give a very negative “signal” to our African allies.

*The various options are being studied urgently. A Defense cabinet meeting could be held quickly on this issue.*⁸⁶

For his part, Habyarimana “seemed to be counting on a direct commitment of French troops to defend Kigali,” according to Bruno Delaye, who met him in Rwanda on 12 and 13 February 1993. Convinced of Yoweri Museveni’s involvement in the events, the Africa advisor let the threat of a direct intervention hang over him:

Since he is worried about our attitude and our degree of involvement (on which I have cast all the ambiguity necessary for a good deterrent), I think he should at least help curb the RPF's appetite [...] We are at the limits of the indirect strategy of supporting the Rwandan armed forces. We are speeding up the delivery of ammunition and equipment [...] If the front is broken, we will have no choice but to evacuate Kigali (the official mission of our two infantry companies is to protect expatriates), unless we become co-belligerents.⁸⁷

What does the term “deterrence” used here by Bruno Delaye mean? Deterrence, in the military domain, is the intimidation of a potential adversary who is aware of the cost of an offensive action. The author uses it here to designate the doubt he entertains with the Ugandan president about the consequences of an advance by RPF soldiers, whom France considers to be supported by Uganda, on Kigali, where French companies are stationed. Implicitly, the question put to Yoweri Museveni was the consequences for Uganda of contact between the two forces. In addition, different degrees of French involvement appear in this short text as possible options. If France is “at the limits of indirect involvement,” this means that it is possible to move to a “semi-direct” involvement, as in the summer of 1992,⁸⁸ “quasi-direct” as was proposed to François Mitterrand by Dominique Pin and Christian Quesnot, as we saw earlier,⁸⁹ or even to enter the war directly on the side of the FAR against the RPF and Uganda. Bruno Delaye was not the only one to ask the question and to envisage crossing “the limits of indirect involvement.” On 10 February, 1993, Jacques Maire wrote a summary of the discussions held during the previous day’s crisis unit for Pierre Bérégofoy. He concluded with the following:

The passage from indirect strategy to direct strategy (Jaguar...) requires a political choice at the highest level. Such an intervention requires a joint request from the President of the Republic and the Rwandan Prime Minister, which is not the case today.⁹⁰

The last sentence is, as we have seen, contradicted by Habyarimana’s requests. On 18 February, 1993, Georges Martres telegraphed the following message, in which he in turn pleaded for a more direct engagement:

Either we let what we have tried to correct so far happen, which may lead us, in the next few days, to withdraw our troops and evacuate our nationals. This is what the Belgians were preparing for in October 1990 and which was considered an abandonment. It will be difficult to minimize the obvious failure of our policy in Rwanda.

Or we adopt a proactive attitude in line with the logic of the responsibilities we have assumed so far.

1/ To President Habyarimana, who is asking us for help against foreign aggression, we agree to send a dissuasive force that could take up position on the Rubengeri/Kigali axis and have two objectives: to alleviate the suffering of the 600,000 displaced persons and to put an end to the violence and abuses of all kinds

2/ To the internal opposition parties that have been asking us for a year to put pressure on Habyarimana to accept a reduction in his powers, we guarantee our support for the immediate application of the Arusha Accords and we advocate the immediate establishment of a transitional government with a broad base, according to the distribution defined on 9 January.⁹¹

François Mitterrand, who took note of the text, commented with a laconic “seen.”⁹²

3.2.1.2 THE RADICALIZATION OF POSITIONS WITHIN THE FRENCH EXECUTIVE

At the end of the crisis unit of 18 February, Foreign Affairs and Defense developed their arguments and positions.

In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jean-Marc de La Sablière wrote a memo for Roland Dumas entitled “Rwanda-French military intervention.” This title had the merit of clearly stating the question that now had to be answered. Rather than stating his position, the Director of African and Malagasy Affairs presented the alternative. One can leave while the RPF is seen as being at the gates of Kigali, or increase the French military presence to 1,000 men with a new mission, “that of protecting Kigali and thus allowing the FAR to regain ground,” which leads him to analyze the consequences of the alternative he has just formulated as follows:

Withdrawal can be justified since we have no legal obligation (absence of a defense agreement) and since the aggression is not characterized (the Prime Minister, who is from the opposition, refuses, unlike President Habyarimana, to speak of aggression against his country supported by Uganda). In summary, we would stress that this conflict is largely an internal affair

and that this limits our action.

The disadvantages are clear: our departure would be perceived as an abandonment by our friends, as a failure on the part of France (we have said: we will not let Kigali be taken). The credibility of our African policy would be largely affected. Finally, if there are massacres, and this is likely, we would risk being held responsible.

The choice of an increased military involvement of our country responds to these drawbacks. This intervention would remain measured (the general staff estimates that 1,000 men would be sufficient; our forces would not be in contact, at least initially, and would protect Kigali).⁹³

The Director of African and Malagasy Affairs therefore proposed a French intervention that would result in a reinforcement of the Noroît companies in Kigali. The memo, apparently balanced, clearly indicates that non-intervention is not really an option. By associating the departure with the failure of France, it rhetorically prevents a real analysis of this possibility; moreover, it only dwells on the diplomatic conditions necessary to send the additional contingent.

On the other hand, on the same day, the Ministry of Defense presented a memo on “possible military options in Rwanda.”⁹⁴ It recognized the significant military difficulties encountered by the FAR, and above all, it developed three scenarios instead of two, as did the Quai d’Orsay. To the two initial options presented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pierre Joxe added a third: offensive engagement. This addition removes a doubt as to the nature of the option consisting of defending only Kigali, so that defending Kigali through a reinforced military presence should not be equated with direct military aid against the RPF. The memo highlights all the material and political difficulties for both the defensive⁹⁵ and offensive⁹⁶ scenarios. However, these two scenarios are refuted by the Minister of Defense:

Options 2 and 3 must be accompanied by increased aid to the Rwandan army. In addition to the serious risks of getting bogged down in the war that options 2 and 3 present, it should be emphasized, on the one hand, that the engagement of most of our strategic reserves would no longer allow us to intervene immediately in other theaters, including Africa. On the other hand, such involvement could not be decided without authorizing the Defense Department to proceed with the additional recruitment of 1,200 and 1,500 volunteer army conscripts (EVAT).⁹⁷

The last budgetary remark is undoubtedly intended to produce a direct refusal. After this first technical memo under the signature of General Mercier, Pierre Joxe personally took up the pen:

The evolution of the situation in Rwanda forces us to consider the evacuation of our nationals and other expatriate communities.

In the absence of an immediate threat to Kigali itself, the two companies present, one of which holds the airport, should be sufficient. If there is an emergency and a need for force protection measures, two additional companies can be quickly dispatched from Bangui and Libreville.

Should we send these two additional companies immediately to show our determination? If we make it clear that they are there to evacuate the expatriates, their arrival will push for the evacuation and accelerate the breakdown of the regime. If we leave ambiguity about the meaning of this move, the Rwandan presidency will not fail to present it as support from France.

I believe that this issue, which is monitored on a daily basis by the interministerial "crisis unit" at the Quai d'Orsay, should now be examined under your presidency. For my part, I remain convinced that we must confine ourselves strictly to the protection of our nationals.⁹⁸

On the document, François Mitterrand notes next to his "seen": "A meeting is scheduled. FM."⁹⁹ The end of the penultimate paragraph implies that Pierre Joxe is pushing for the elimination of intermediaries and for decisions to be taken directly by the President of the Republic. On 19 February 1993, General Quesnot sent a file to President François Mitterrand with a handwritten note:

Mr. President, in addition to the memo on Rwanda, you will find enclosed: The explicit position of Mr. Joxe; the analysis of the different options by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I remain convinced of the need to send at least two additional companies to Kigali in the immediate future and to continue to help the Rwandan army.¹⁰⁰

It was General Quesnot, who advocated the reinforcement of French forces and the provision of aid to the FAR, who precipitated François Mitterrand's decision. In order to reinforce the position, he signed a memo with Dominique Pin the same day, to be read once again by the President of the Republic. The passages underlined are by François Mitterrand:

The military situation remains very worrying. President Habyarimana called this morning. He believes that the Ugandan involvement alongside the RPF is

such, according to information that has been cross-checked, that the Rwandan forces will not be able to hold out for long on the current lines near Kigali. He reports numerous executions of civilians in the areas conquered by the RPF and fears that the massacres will increase. Reliable testimonies confirm these statements.

Following your request and your indications, the following measures can be envisaged:

1) The evacuation of nationals in the next few days if the RPF maintains its intention to seize the city, the withdrawal of Noroît. President Habyarimana's power would not survive this departure and bloody ethnic settlements would ensue. This is the failure of our presence and our policy in Rwanda. Our credibility on the continent would suffer.

2) The immediate dispatch of at least two companies to Kigali in order to effectively protect our nationals and all expatriates in the event of a brutal arrival of rebel troops in the capital, but also to send a clear signal to the RPF in order to curb its appetites. This action, without solving the basic problems, would save time.

3) Sending a larger contingent to prevent the RPF from taking Kigali and to make Rwandan units available to re-establish their positions at least along the previous cease-fire line. This last option would require both a Rwandan request that the country be the victim of external aggression and consultation with Presidents Houphouët-Boigny, Abou Diouf, and Bongo. It would have the advantage of showing our determination that the Rwandan crisis be resolved solely through political means. However, it would signal an almost direct involvement.

Options 2 or 3 should be accompanied by explanations of our position: defense of nationals and other expatriates, protection of the capital in order to limit inter-ethnic massacres, opposition to any solution other than negotiated. For the time being, we are in favor of solution 2, which, if it fails, could constitute a reception structure for solution 3. These two solutions, each accompanied by intense diplomatic action, would make it possible, at the appropriate time, to withdraw in more dignified conditions.¹⁰¹

Once again, it is not insignificant that the same memo was signed by the head of the EMP and by the deputy of the Africa advisor at the Élysée. Both are pushing for an intervention that, without bringing French companies into contact with the RPF, will ensure that Kigali and the Habyarimana regime have sufficient conditions to remain in place. We can see from the options outlined in the memo that the pressure from the Ministry of Defense not to get too involved in aiding the Rwandan government has had an effect, because option two of this memo is a

downgraded version of option 2 advocated by Foreign Affairs and initially supported by the Chief of the General Staff. François Mitterrand made his decision, which was recorded in a handwritten note on the document: “favorable opinion on solution 2.”¹⁰²

In the wake of this, still on 19 February 1993, General Quesnot communicated to the Director of the Cabinet of the Minister of Defense: “The President of the Republic has decided to send two additional companies to Rwanda as a matter of urgency, in order to ensure the immediate security of our nationals and, if necessary, of other expatriates.”¹⁰³ Thus, it would appear that the opinion of the Minister of Defense was influential, since the dispatch of additional companies was a prerequisite for the evacuation of nationals.

3.2.1.3 HOW TO REVERSE THE DECISION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC

However, the failure of the options proposed by the Chief of Staff after the presidential decision fueled a new game of influence to modify the decisions of 19 February. Verbatim notes taken by General Quesnot and addressed to Bruno Delaye during the core cabinet meeting of 24 February 1993 prove this: he reproduced the interventions of the various participants.¹⁰⁴ While Pierre Joxe called for France to leave because of the risk of getting bogged down in the war in Rwanda, Roland Dumas, Christian Quesnot and Pierre Bérégovoy defended the principle of staying, even though it had already been decided to reinforce the French force. At this stage, not leaving as planned, since the additional companies were to allow for the evacuation of French nationals, was the position defended by the Ministry - and the Minister of Defense, who was nonetheless responsible for the execution of this presidential order. A handwritten note from Pierre Joxe, written two days later, is preserved in the fonds of Marcel Debarge’s cabinet. It shows how the Minister of Defense perceived the vanity of the strategy chosen by the President of the Republic, and thus expressed his most extreme reservations:

- *Concern about the French position and therefore the risk that this entails.*
 - *The Rwandan army is not fighting.*
 - *I do not see why the RPF would give up a victory that is so close.*¹⁰⁵
-

- I do not see what pressure can be put on Museveni.

- I do not see what pressure can be put on Habyarimana, who feels protected by France when it is his political intransigence that is responsible for the current fiasco. The only way to pressure him is to make him aware of the possibility of our disengagement (so that he will soften his position).¹⁰⁶

The anaphora “I do not see,” beyond the stylistic effect, refers to the Defense Minister’s definite spite concerning French policy in Rwanda. Nevertheless, not a word is said about the massacres, a sign that for the Minister of Defense the problem lies elsewhere. His concern is the evolution of the military situation on the ground and the way to soften the position of the Rwandan President within the framework of the ongoing negotiations. For him, the solution lies in blackmail concerning a possible French disengagement. However, the verbatim report of the core cabinet meeting of 24 February shows the determination of François Mitterrand, who closed this debate with a firm decision: “there is no question of leaving,” with the agreement of his Prime Minister, Pierre Bérégovoy, “It is politically impossible for us to withdraw from Rwanda at this time.” The hesitations, however, continued until March 1993, as demonstrated by a series of memos such as the one by Dominique Pin and Christian Quesnot, who presented the possible military options shortly before the core cabinet meeting of 24 February 1993:

Leave.

After the evacuation of our nationals and the withdrawal of our troops, President Habyarimana should not be able to remain at the head of the State. Our departure would be interpreted as the failure of our policy in Rwanda. We could see the creation of a Tutsi Kampala-Kigali-Bujumbura axis.

Maintain the mechanism at its current level and wait.

This would make it possible to delay the evacuation of our nationals, provided that the RPF does not decide to enter Kigali militarily.

It is a choice that maintains a certain ambiguity about our determination, an ambiguity that may seem temporarily desirable.

To intervene strongly in support of the Rwandan army.

It is a question of reversing the balance of power by increasing our assistance to the Rwandan army through a powerful logistical contribution and an involvement of advisors and artillery equal to our determination. We would be present and active in the areas of operation, but we would not participate directly in the fighting.

Intervening strongly and directly with our forces.

This choice, technically possible, can only be considered if we have

*irrefutable proof of direct Ugandan military intervention, which is not the case at present (...). We remain in favor, from a military point of view, of solution 3 accompanied by firm diplomatic action.*¹⁰⁷

Several common themes emerge from these documents. The first is the refusal of a withdrawal of French companies, which would not only be an admission of failure of French policy as a whole since October 1990, but also an opportunity for “the Tutsi” to assert their supremacy and establish a territory reserved for them. This solution was rejected, possibly because it would mean abandoning the thesis that the “majority people” should govern, which France did not question. The choice to maintain a dissuasive ambiguity reappears. Nevertheless, Dominique Pin and Christian Quesnot finally advocated a solution that recalled the modalities of the French engagement in the summer of 1992, that is, a “semi-direct” engagement that compensated, in reality, for the failures of the Rwandan defense in order to maintain the solidity of the system and prevent the RPF from taking Kigali. Thus, on 2 March 1993, Jean Marc de La Sablière described a risky situation because:

Our forces may be in a delicate situation in two hypotheses:

- *if the RPF launched an offensive on Kigali and came into direct contact with our soldiers*
- *if the RPF were to advance without reaching the capital, pushing ahead of it, as it has already done in previous offensives, the masses of war-displaced people who would flood into Kigali.*¹⁰⁸

Thus, as can be seen, at the end of February 1993, the options supported by the EMP, but also by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as Matignon, largely prevailed, even though on 19 February Pierre Joxe had obtained a decision from François Mitterrand. This underlines both the weight of Pierre Joxe, who managed to obtain presidential decisions, and the tenacity of those around the President who were keen on French and military involvement in Rwanda. The French reinforcement in Rwanda in February-March 1993 thus appears in all its political dimension: there is a will not to leave even though the awareness of the difficulty of the French position in Rwanda is growing. This explains why the command of the French operation in Rwanda was given to

a senior officer who was perfectly aware of the very political issues surrounding the subject of Rwanda, Colonel Delort, Admiral Lanxade's Africa advisor.

3.2.1.4 The mobilization of the French diplomatic apparatus

France therefore took diplomatic steps with the Rwandan government to smooth out, at least in appearance, the relations between the president and his prime minister. At the same time, it tried to organize the support of the international community for the Rwandan government.

Recourse to international law: the notion of "aggression"

Internally, the advisors to the President of the Republic, and ultimately he himself, are convinced that the RPF offensive is led by Uganda, and that it is therefore an external aggression carried out by a sovereign State against another sovereign State. It considers that it is therefore an external aggression led by Uganda in order to overthrow the political independence of the country.

On 10 February, 1993, as elements of the Noroît detachment were preparing to evacuate French and European nationals from Ruhengeri, Georges Martres sent a diplomatic telegram that stood out from the other messages of the same day because of its length and its objectives. It is a long geopolitical dissertation, an unusual approach for an ambassador, which aims to demonstrate that the offensive serves the objectives of the President of Uganda:

We are witnessing the realization of President Museveni's original plan, as initiated by General Rwigyema's attack on 1 October 1990, in Kagitumba. Formed by a core of Tutsi émigrés who had served in the Ugandan army, the Rwandan Patriotic Front's objective was, if not to re-establish the old monarchy, at least to bring about the triumph of an apparent regime based on the principle of national unity (there was no question of a multi-party system), but within which the Tutsi minority would have the opportunity to assert its cultural, technical and economic superiority.

In order to achieve this objective, it was necessary to overcome the deep hostility of the Hutu, still imbued with the memory of the 1959 revolution, which had consecrated the victory of the "popular majority" over the administrative oligarchy of the time.

The discontent of the underprivileged masses, victims of nepotism and corruption, was relied upon. Above all, they were counting on the antagonism of the people of the south (Banyanduga) who were frustrated by the 1973 coup d'état that had placed the Akazu (inner circle) of the Bashiru (President Habyarimana's clan) in power.

This amalgamation of the discontented from within with the heirs of the former aristocracy could not take place in 1990, as the Hutu country, framed by the single party, viscerally resisted external aggression, despite the RPF's initially very correct behavior towards the populations of the attacked areas.¹⁰⁹

On 18 February, General Quesnot added a handwritten comment to his memo to the President of the Republic, which continued in the direction of an offensive by Uganda rather than the RPF:

If we do not find sufficient leverage to stop Museveni, who has implicit British support, the Francophonie front will be permanently damaged and compromised in this region. Contrary to current historical developments, a minority Tutsi ethnic group will secure power by force over a Uganda-Rwanda-Burundi regional bloc.¹¹⁰

Two days later, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Catherine Boivineau said nothing different in a letter to the French embassy in Kigali.¹¹¹

A French Via Dolorosa: Security Council Resolution 812

French diplomatic efforts came up against the reluctance of European countries to support the regime of Juvénal Habyarimana, which contributed to isolate France on the international scene on this issue.

At a time when France was committed to supporting the Rwandan government, various alerts about the nature of the Rwandan regime reached the Élysée Palace and various ministries. Indeed, faced with the fear of a possible blockage of Arusha, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked its ambassadors in the countries concerned to take steps to find support.¹¹² The ambassadors did so, but reported mixed reactions from the governments they contacted.¹¹³ They regularly point to the responsibility of Habyarimana's regime and the extremists in the ongoing blockage of negotiations, as for example in London.¹¹⁴ Jacques Andréani, the French ambassador in Washington, reported that

for the State Department and the Pentagon, the organized nature of the RPF offensive was not in doubt, but that questions were being asked about France's intentions: "The State Department asked about our

intentions concerning the Noroît detachment: will it be reinforced and for what purpose? Andréani.”¹¹⁵

With some countries, the President of the Republic became personally involved, for example, on 19 January 1993, François Mitterrand wrote a personal letter to Helmut Kohl reminding him of the aid already provided by Germany. The latter replied on 18 February, 1993, mentioning the responsibility of the Rwandan government in the present situation.¹¹⁶ The tone is similar on the part of the head of the Canadian government, to whom François Mitterrand also wrote on 19 January 1993. The reply from the Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, was also a refusal and did not arrive until April.¹¹⁷ In any case, this total isolation of France on the international scene did not discourage Dominique Pin:

*Our isolation on this issue at the international level [...] must lead us to deploy an even more offensive diplomatic effort to gather the diplomatic support necessary for the implementation of the results - theoretical results - obtained by this mission in Kigali and Kampala. This effort is being considered by the Quai d'Orsay.*¹¹⁸

Finally, when contacted by Ambassador Gérard, Museveni used irony, if we are to believe the two diplomatic telegrams reporting on his approach. In the first, the Ugandan president's goodwill is mentioned;¹¹⁹ in a second telegram, the ambassador reports that the Ugandan president emphasizes, despite everything, the nature of the Rwandan regime:

*President Museveni then asked me what Western countries were doing in Kigali to prevent the resurgence of ethnic unrest such as had recently bloodied northern Rwanda and to ensure that justice was done [...]. I assured Mr. Museveni that we were by no means inactive, that we were throwing all our weight behind national reconciliation, and that we had in particular asked that all light be shed on the causes and responsibilities of the incidents that we strongly condemned.*¹²⁰

At the beginning of March 1993, France's diplomatic efforts focused on the representatives of permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council in order to get them to recognize the existence of external aggression against Rwanda and the need to engage an

interposition peacekeeping force. The negotiations can be read in the diplomatic cables exchanged between the ambassadors in New

York and Washington and the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs at the Quai d'Orsay. This is done through the steering of Rwandan diplomacy by French diplomats. Thus, Jean-Bernard Mérimée, France's permanent representative to this UN institution, contacted the Rwandan chargé d'affaires, who informed him that the Rwandan government did not wish to send a letter to the President of the Security Council because "such an action was indeed considered premature by its authorities."¹²¹ French diplomacy did not take note of this refusal and seemed to strongly insist because a new telegram was sent to Paris in its wake, in which Jean-Bernard Mérimée confirmed that Rwanda had given in and sent a letter of referral, the terms of which had been drafted, if not by French diplomats, at least in collaboration with them.¹²² This determination can be explained by the power play at the same time between the French representatives and their counterparts from the permanent members of the Security Council. After his first meeting on 4 March, 1993 with the Rwandan diplomat, Mérimée began consultations to prepare a draft resolution that would decide "on the creation of a UN monitoring force whose deployment would take place on the basis of a subsequent report by the Secretary General."¹²³ The initial refusal of Rwandan diplomacy to refer the matter to the President of the Security Council nevertheless placed Jean-Bernard Mérimée in a quandary,¹²⁴ especially since his interlocutors were particularly reticent about the French proposal:

My colleagues questioned the need for the Security Council to take an immediate decision on the deployment of a peacekeeping force. The representatives of Spain, Cape Verde and Great Britain were the most outspoken in this regard. They highlighted the current mission of the Secretary General, who is due to arrive in Kigali tomorrow and stay there until next Tuesday. They expressed their wish to act on the basis of the analysis and practical recommendations of the Secretariat. In this regard, Mr. Jonah, who spoke briefly during the Council's consultation session, stated the Secretariat's readiness to communicate to the members as of tomorrow the first elements of reflection that it would have. Only the permanent representative of Djibouti gave us his full support.

Finally, on a bilateral basis, the British delegation informed us of London's "serious doubts" and asked us several questions: was it not indirectly condemning Uganda? What would be the role, in the framework of

*a possible UN peacekeeping operation, of the French soldiers currently present in Rwanda? What was the link between the deployment of such an operation and the search for a political settlement, at a time when an important meeting was opening today in Dar-es-Salam? The other permanent council members merely indicated that they would seek instructions.*¹²⁵

In order to convince his counterparts, Jean-Bernard Mérimée believes it is necessary to obtain an “explicit agreement from the Rwandan government on the principle and objectives of an immediate referral to the Security Council (the slightest doubt on Rwanda’s position would condemn us to failure).”¹²⁶ This explains his insistence on convincing his Rwandan counterpart to write this letter, even if it means dictating the terms. In fact, for France, whose troops on the ground would then come under the UN banner, it was a matter of legitimizing its action with the international community, which was invited to take a position in order to break out of its diplomatic isolation on the issue.

However, Rwanda’s referral to the presidency of the Security Council hardly overcame the reluctance of the other countries that were trying to gain time. Having received no instructions, according to them, between the initial Rwandan refusal and the official referral, “their reactions were therefore expressed in a primarily questioning mode,”¹²⁷ particularly with regard to the role that the OAU should play. The Secretary General wishes to encourage a more visible involvement of this organization in a possible peacekeeping operation. The challenge was to obtain a definitive opinion from him: “If Mr. Boutros Ghali supported our suggestion, they would join us.”¹²⁸ Jean-Bernard Mérimée envisaged two scenarios: if the Secretary General supported the French proposal, the decision that would be taken quickly would be the creation of a control force in Rwanda with the French army as the main force; if he wished to wait, the potentially most effective French reaction would be to obtain a resolution asking him to present a report to the Security Council on the possible deployment of an interposition force. He asked for instructions from the Department in the case of the latter eventuality before 10 a.m. on 5 March.¹²⁹ It was not until 4:40 p.m. that he received a reply, in the form of an agreement under the second hypothesis to reshape the draft resolution: “it is important, in view of the gravity of the situation, to obtain a rapid decision from the Council creating a monitoring force in Rwanda.”¹³⁰ Paris insisted

that the United Nations should support the GOMN (Group of Neutral Military Observers) and recognized that the UN should take “joint action” with the OAU. This desire to involve the OAU and not leave the UN to deal with the issue alone can be explained in several ways. On several occasions, mention is made of the reluctance of the United States to see the UN go it alone. Jacques Andréani, the French ambassador in Washington, mentioned this several times in his telegrams of 5 March 1993.¹³¹ According to the United States, it is up to Africa to take charge of its own problems. The debates on the appropriateness of deploying a UN force in Rwanda and the interest of involving the OAU continued for several more days. The deputy secretary general, Kofi Annan, was himself reticent and made it known that he would not be able to pronounce himself in favor of the immediate deployment of a peacekeeping force. According to him, it was first necessary to obtain the Secretary General’s evaluation of the mission underway in Kigali, which led France to endorse the modification of the draft resolution as agreed, insisting on the role of the OAU. This proposal was supported by African countries (Djibouti, Cape Verde) and Pakistan. The French representative specified that “the American colleague expressed in general terms the interest of her authorities in our proposal” while Spain and the United Kingdom remained hesitant.¹³² On 7 March, 1993, Daniel Bernard, director of the cabinet of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, wrote a memo to the Secretary General of the Élysée Palace, Hubert Védrine, curiously with the handwritten note “to be kept,” in order to take stock of the progress of negotiations:

Following the decisions taken in the core cabinet meeting last Wednesday, our delegation in New York actively supported the request presented on Friday by the Rwandan delegation for referral to the Security Council.

If in the meantime the situation should deteriorate irremediably, he [the UN Secretary General] hopes that the French forces already on the ground can be called upon to fulfill the mission that the UN would entrust to them in order to prevent possible massacres.¹³³

This memo is not preserved in Hubert Védrine’s archives, which are available in the National Archives. In any case, on 9 March, 1993, Jean-Bernard Mérimée reported the failure of the French proposal to win the support of his counterparts.¹³⁴ The draft resolution

was presented to the members of the Security Council. While the French representative mentioned the “benevolence of the non-aligned,”¹³⁵ the objections of the Western partners who demanded a central role for the OAU and a simple support function for the UN were added to a relative disillusionment with Kofi Annan’s reservations. The representatives of the United Kingdom and Spain welcomed this statement, while the deputy secretary-general made no reference to the French draft resolution and “questioned”¹³⁶ whether the UN should take action.

Marcel Debarge’s visit to Rwanda (27 February - 1 March, 1993)

France also intervened through diplomatic channels, particularly with Rwanda and Uganda. After Bruno Delaye and Jean-Marc de La Sablière just two weeks earlier, it was Marcel Debarge’s turn to make the trip to Kigali and Kampala. This trip was the subject of intense preparation. A memo from Dominique Pin indicated the language that the Minister was to use in the two capitals:

To recall the unacceptability for France of a military solution to the Rwandan crisis. Faced with the offensive of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), we have therefore increased our indirect support to the Rwandan army (equipment, ammunition, advice) and strengthened the contingent responsible for the protection of French nationals and other expatriates (4 companies are currently in Kigali - 600 men).

To emphasize that our military assistance must promote a negotiated solution acceptable to all. Also, a rapprochement between President Habyarimana and his Prime Minister is essential. They must act together to ensure that their differences are not exploited by the RPF and that the transition process leads to the holding of elections in the near future.

In this regard, it is regrettable that President Habyarimana’s party (MRNDD) has refused to join the other political parties in the government coalition that are trying to negotiate with the RPF in Bujumbura to resume the Arusha negotiations, which is essential.

[...] To point out to Museveni, who is concerned about his regional role, that a return to peace in Rwanda, which depends largely on him, would promote the development of our relations at a time when he must face Islamist expansionism on his northern border (Sudan).¹³⁷

The preparation and conduct of the mission are also documented in the archives of the technical advisor Jean-Marie Bruno of

the office of the Minister Delegate for Cooperation and Development.¹³⁸ Marcel Debarge was solicited by Jean Carbonare on the one hand, and by the EMP on the other, concerning the report of the International Commission of Investigation and the massacres committed in Rwanda by the Hutu against the Tutsi. His speeches in the presence of the Rwandan and Ugandan authorities are well framed by three new unsigned memos, but probably from the work of the cabinet. For the meeting with President Habyarimana, scheduled for 27 February, 1993, the preparatory document specifies that the language to be used revolves around three themes. The first was that of the “indirect strategy,” the principle of which he had to reiterate, but “if no prospect of a political settlement becomes clear, France cannot fail to reconsider the modalities of its presence in Rwanda.”¹³⁹ The second theme insists on the need for the Rwandan president and his prime minister to present a united front: “The president must not discredit himself by accepting the risk that the conflict will degenerate between Rwandan factions. This would be the best way to provoke his own downfall and unleash chaos: the MRND must join the Bujumbura negotiations.”¹⁴⁰ It is necessary not to call into question the negotiations underway, but rather to map out the post-Arusha period and reach elections: “We will help.”¹⁴¹ Thirdly, the Minister can address the theme of human rights and stress that there are “atrocities on both sides, but intransigence on human rights regardless of the side. Inter-ethnic massacres are unacceptable, especially if they are ordered.”¹⁴² Measures to control and sanction those responsible must be taken, or Rwanda will alienate international public opinion and “its last French supporters. On this subject, it is advisable in any case not to leave the monopoly of the international media to the RPF and the Rwandan president is invited to make efforts to communicate.”¹⁴³ In any case, Marcel Debarge must exert clear pressure on Juvénal Habyarimana, but, significantly, without directly implicating him in human rights violations, i.e. the massacres of

Tutsi. The use of expressions such as “inter-ethnic massacres” and “atrocities in both camps” ultimately put Hutu and Tutsi back to back. The precision “especially if they were ordered” nevertheless shows an acquired knowledge of the origin of the killings, but this does not encourage a break in dialogue or an ad hominem condemnation.

The meeting with Prime Minister Dismas Nsengiyaremye was scheduled for 27 February 1993. The preparatory document also specifies the elements of language.¹⁴⁴ Compared to those concerning the meeting with Juvénal Habyarimana, two items are similar and the one on “human rights” disappears. It is replaced by “communication” without any invitation to discuss the massacres with him. This tends to show that, for the French, the main perpetrators of the violence are not those around the Rwandan Prime Minister. Regarding the “indirect strategy,” the comments to be made are identical. The question of the “united front” is a reminder of the need to reach an agreement with Habyarimana. There is also mention of the incentives “to convince his supporters to participate in the Bujumbura meeting.”¹⁴⁵ A question is added: “what is the President’s real authority over the MRND extremists?” which reflects an interesting concern on the part of the Ministry of Cooperation, and is not mentioned elsewhere. Rwanda must also be protected from the risk of a coup de force or an agreement with the RPF:

*There is no salvation in an alliance with the RPF, whose interests are only to divide the Rwandan authorities and which will not give up its strategy, so far successful, to conquer power. In the event of a further radicalization of the conflict, any third force would be swept away.*¹⁴⁶

The French participation in the political settlement of the conflict in Arusha is also included in the “we will help” document, while the Prime Minister is also invited to improve his communication through the international media.¹⁴⁷

The third document concerns the meeting with President Museveni in Kampala on 1 March, 1993, at 10 a.m. Two items should be discussed. Firstly, the political-military evolution suggested, i.e. convincing the RPF “that there is no chance of a lasting military solution to the conflict. France cannot remain inert in the face of such aggression:

uncertainty about the attitude of French troops.”¹⁴⁸ This was, of course, a diplomatically veiled threat of a more offensive engagement of the four companies already in place. France wanted concrete signs from the RPF, i.e., the return to the positions occupied on 7 February 1993, the return of displaced persons to their homes and the return of observers to the front line. The objective is to guarantee a balanced sharing of power within the framework of the Arusha process and the existence of the zone of neutrality.¹⁴⁹ The second, entitled “Neither dupes nor enemies - Ego,” insists on the necessary evolution of Museveni’s policy in view of his calmer diplomatic relations with France, and the gain he could find there:

*The recognition of Uganda and its leader as a key regional partner depends on his ability to push for a peaceful solution with the RPF. No regional or even continental stature without peace. The evolution of the French attitude in other regional conflicts (Sudan) also depends on the developments that we will be able to observe on the ground in Rwanda, as well as our bilateral aid. If peace is re-established in the region, we could envisage an official visit to France and a role as a privileged partner in English-speaking Africa.*¹⁵⁰

However, the archives contain a document that sheds more light on the French position, breaking with the polished writing of the usual analyses.¹⁵¹ Thus, at the MMC, Colonel Capodano¹⁵² wrote a memo to General Varret¹⁵³ on 26 February 1993, which sheds light on the various political and diplomatic blockages, as well as the way in which France was weighing heavily on the protagonists. On the military level, nothing was settled. Those in charge are still faced with the same situation because the French president still does not want direct action, yet they are convinced that Kigali is really threatened; a solution must therefore be found. In the immediate term, it is the delivery of ammunition to the FAR; in the medium term, it is the reorganization of military cooperation. The security of French nationals is still the justification for the French military presence in Rwanda, with the presence of some twenty cooperants from the *Aide Militaire Technique* (AMT), which we have seen are used extensively to reinforce the skills of the FAR.¹⁵⁴

The progress of Marcel Debarge’s trip is precisely described by the French ambassador in Kigali, Georges Martres, in a long

telegram dated 1 March, 1993. The first point addressed was that of the French military presence:

The Minister recalled that this presence was linked both to the Franco-Rwandan technical military cooperation agreement, which leads us to provide the Rwandan army with indirect aid, and to the need to protect our nationals. In the current state of the situation in Rwanda, it cannot have any other objective.

This analysis is shared by the Prime Minister and the opposition ministers, who also seem convinced that the brutal withdrawal of our troops would not only lead to the capture of Kigali by the RPF, but also to the massacre of Tutsi and the cadres of the opposition movements.¹⁵⁵ Some ministers would even like to see the mission of our military extended to the security of the local population. They cite, for example, the fact that the local population is currently reassured by the presence of French soldiers at the checkpoints at the exits from Kigali (passers-by are no longer held for ransom and there are far fewer thefts).

The President would obviously like our military presence to take a more "dynamic" form and to correspond to an increasing commitment against an enemy coming from outside, to whom he attributes the main responsibility in the war. This is, according to him, an attempt by Uganda to annex Rwanda. In support of this point of view, he cites the considerable resources in men and equipment that the RPF is getting from the Ugandan NRA.¹⁵⁶

This document needs to be commented on in depth. First of all, its first limitation must be pointed out: the meetings are transcribed by the French ambassador and it is through his filter that the content of the discussions is known. There is no direct account by Marcel Debarge that is preserved in the French archives.¹⁵⁷ He gave only a short summary on the occasion of the core cabinet meeting of 3 March, 1993:

I have just returned from Uganda and Rwanda. Concerning the presence of a French detachment, officially some say that this presence is not necessary; in a small group all ask us to "stay there above all." President Habyarimana is disoriented and at the end of his rope. We were behind the press release. The RPF has strengthened its positions; it could continue its political and military offensives. Displaced people can distort the situation, they are potential targets for the RPF who can fire mortars at them to drive them into Kigali.¹⁵⁸

As reported in this brief intervention, Marcel Debarge does not specify why people want the French troops to stay. In any case, it is interesting to

note that Georges Martres' account in TD Kigali 227 shows the divisions in Rwandan power, not only on the objectives of the reinforcement of the mission of the Noroît companies, but also on the willingness of some and others to form a common front. On the first point, the opposition, led by the Prime Minister, mentions that the French troops should have a wider scope of action, not in an operational perspective against the RPF but for the protection of the population, particularly Tutsi, and also those who are members of a minority party. There is evidence of a fear that the violence will become more radical and intensify against a particular target group. In fact, the presence of French soldiers at the entrances to Kigali is confirmed, but it is encouraged by the opposition because it allows maintaining order and contributes, according to them, to curbing the extremists. The departure of the French troops is envisaged as beginning massacres that appear to be inevitable. On the other hand, there is no question of this on the part of Juvénal Habyarimana, who repeats his usual language to the French delegation. Interestingly, he refers to the unconditional support he claims to have from the President of the French Republic himself. This is, possibly, a way to delegitimize Marcel Debarge's ability to change his policy. Obviously, beyond the words of intent, the blockage is total, but it seems to come only from Juvénal Habyarimana. Is he deluding himself about the level of support he claims to have? The problem is that the success of the Debarge mission is subject to contradictory analyses. The president's advisors mention the limitations of the meetings but focus, so to speak, on the positive, even if it means making some shifts in meaning and forgetting to mention certain facts. In the margin of the preserved copy of the TD of 1 March, 1993, General Quesnot makes some handwritten comments to which François Mitterrand adds his "seen." The head of the EMP writes:

- 1) *The visit of Mr. Debarge seems to allow or favor the indispensable rapprochement⁵⁹ between the president and the prime minister.*
 - 2) *The presence of our forces, guarantors of personal security in Kigali, must continue in the opinion of the various Rwandan political forces met by the Minister.*
 - 3) *The RPF's strategy of force and its undemocratic vision of the future are clearly apparent, even to supporters of a "third force."⁶⁰*
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On 2 March, 1993, Dominique Pin, who accompanied the Minister of Cooperation, notified François Mitterrand that no rapprochement between Habyarimana and his Prime Minister seemed conceivable, the former being presented by the author as “obsolete” and he added “Convinced of our commitment to him, he cannot believe that we will let the RPF enter Kigali as the victor.”¹⁶¹ For their part, the Prime Minister and the opposition “still believe in their chance to impose themselves as a third force.”¹⁶² But he adds almost immediately, contradicting somewhat the previous statements:

After clear and severe warnings (the urgency of reaching a political compromise and presenting a united front against the RPF in the next few days, the illusion that a third force could succeed because the RPF, which is in the minority, will impose a totalitarian policy if it wins, and a reminder of the limited objectives of the French intervention (...) the president and the opposition nevertheless agreed to collaborate and to define together the position that the prime minister would defend during his meeting with the RPF leader in Dar-es-Salam on March 3: This meeting could lead to the resumption of the Arusha negotiations.¹⁶³

In fact, François Mitterrand’s advisors continued their logic: to present the RPF as the one and only enemy, even if it meant using surprising formulas, such as the adjective “totalitarian.” On the other hand, they insist on the fact that the rapprochement between the Rwandan president, the prime minister and the opposition is on the right track, which is an optimistic analysis if one considers that the former is blocking the latter while the latter is accepting a polite approach but not excluding the option of replacing him. Finally, none of these analyses mentions the peril to which the Tutsi and the opposition are exposed.

3.2.2 The French military intervention in Rwanda

What was happening on the ground and what did the military institution think? The archives of the General Staff (Bureau Emploi) in Paris¹⁶⁴ provide an idea. On the one hand, they provide another way of measuring the real military involvement of the French: were they the ones who stopped the RPF? On the other hand, as early as March, other questions emerge: how to deal with the prospect of seeing the French replaced by Blue Helmets?

3.2.2.1 A very political command of the French operation

The confrontations of February-March 1993 resulted in a temporary increase in the number of senior French officers in Rwanda. On 12 February, the Noroît detachment was reinforced by an EFAO (*Elements français d'assistance opérationnelle*) company whose mission was “of a humanitarian nature focused solely on the protection of nationals.” Colonel Cussac, the Defense attaché, received orders from the general staff.¹⁶⁵ The instructions did not change; under no circumstances was the impression to be given of directly supporting the Rwandan army:

The actions that the French elements might be led to carry out outside the capital must in no way give the appearance of collusion with those that the FAR might carry out on their side to oppose the advance of the RPF.¹⁶⁶

The rules of engagement have not changed: “It goes without saying that you will avoid any combat action and that the rules of behavior laid down will be based solely on self-defense, extended to the people you will be called upon to protect.”¹⁶⁷ In addition to being responsible for Noroît and the DAMI, the Defense attaché is also responsible for ensuring that the FAR do not run out of ammunition, “with the greatest discretion.”¹⁶⁸ It was not he, however, who was destined to become operational commander. It was Colonel Delort, who came directly from the General Staff where he was in charge of the Africa and External Relations Office, and who was already on the ground on a “special mission,” who was chosen.¹⁶⁹ Additional forces had arrived or were about to arrive.¹⁷⁰ Concerning the use of Noroît, “it is a matter of clearly showing our determination to oppose any threat to our nationals in Kigali,”¹⁷¹ but this notion of protection seems to be interpreted in an extensive manner. In reality, Colonel Delort’s mission was to organize a sort of glacis north of Kigali:

To this end, while retaining the means to carry out the initial mission of Noroît in the city, you will set up a deterrent system at the northern exits from Kigali, on the Rubengeri and Byumba axes, able to gain, either by your presence alone, or by the use of arms, the time necessary for the regrouping, and possible evacuation of our nationals. You may then be called upon to open fire.¹⁷²

It is a real shield that blocks the road to the capital. Note

the authorization - rare - to open fire without prior authorization from the EMA if, of course, the need arises. "As far as possible, if time permits, you will request my authorization beforehand."¹⁷³ The RAPAS (Aerospace Research and Special Actions) unit has the mission of assisting individual senior officers of the FAR, but its expertise seems to be more extensive.¹⁷⁴

Compared to the 1992 instructions, those of February 1993 seem to show a more resolute position from France. Four companies will soon be in the field, and it is the staff's own Africa advisor who is the operational commander. On 24 February 1993, he signed his first operation orders, No. 1 and 1-A.¹⁷⁵ After an analysis of the situation similar to the previous one, the definition of the mission is concise, but the orders are in the spirit of those given by the CEMA: "Clearly show our determination to oppose all threats against our nationals in Kigali while reinforcing our assistance to the Rwandan command."¹⁷⁶ Further on, *Noroît's* function is clearly stated: to deny the RPF entry into Kigali. The commander of operations wants intelligence on the situation at the front and to the north of the capital and was going to "prohibit any action by the RPF on the outskirts of the city and retain control of the security of the airport and the essential axes."¹⁷⁷ He also wants to "act on the EM/FAR and at least two sector commands in order to boost the monitoring of the situation and the design of operations." The intelligence unit is particularly developed - in June 1992, the intelligence transmitted by the FAR had proved to be unreliable: it had three officers, and another who would be seconded from *Noroît* on request, as well as seven officers from the AMT.¹⁷⁸

Noroît was maintained as it was: "Because of the situation in Rwanda, it was decided to maintain the *Noroît* system for an indefinite period of time."¹⁷⁹ The aim, however, was the cessation of hostilities and on 10 March a cease-fire was signed. It was therefore necessary to rethink the instructions and to draw up a new order of conduct, and that of 19 March 1993 stated:

The RPF offensive was blocked after its failures on Rubengeri and Byumba and could not be pursued in the direction of Kigali because of the risk of internationalization of the conflict. During the first days of March, the FAR knocked out the strong RPF positions in the Tumba sector and the areas of Mount Kabuye, Mukarange and Bwisige with very precise fire, but were unable

*to hold on to the positions that they had hard won during local counter-attacks. The front was gradually consolidated north of the capital.*¹⁸⁰

It was now time to relieve the Noroît system. Two French companies were to leave Rwanda, and for those that remained, the instructions were unchanged: the priority was to protect the north of Kigali. Intelligence must be gathered up to 10 km from the capital, the northern axes must be monitored, and a route must be able to be blocked on three hours' notice. It was necessary to ensure the security of nationals while controlling the airport and providing assistance to the FAR command at all levels.¹⁸¹ On 24 March 1993, when a new order of conduct was drawn up, Colonel Delort noted that "the RPF had withdrawn the bulk of its forces to the positions of 7 February while maintaining observation teams in the demilitarized zone."¹⁸² Colonel Delort placed the operations in a political framework from the outset. The RPF, he thought, should "continue its attack in order to dislocate or at least break up the front and cause the collapse of the army, while at the same time proposing discussion with the internal opposition. It is also the formula of double or nothing."¹⁸³ But his confidence in the Rwandan army's ability to cope is limited. In his message of 10 February, 1993, Colonel Delort remained very reserved about what would happen next and pointed out the weaknesses of the Rwandan army. His impression was that "despite a great success in Ruhengeri (not to mention the looting...), the FAR have been experiencing their most serious difficulties since the end of the 1990s."¹⁸⁴ However, the situation calmed down, even though the next day, 11 February, there were still many deadly clashes. He intended to set up "alarms," posts responsible for warning in case of RPF infiltration towards Kigali, by installing them out of sight of the roads, on the heights, in order to counter "the negative argument [which] could let it appear that French soldiers were defending Kigali."¹⁸⁵

Colonel Delort had to accompany Jean-Marc de La Sablière and Bruno Delaye's mission to meet with Museveni and he invited them to see the military situation in an entirely political context, with the Rwandan army was at its wits' end.¹⁸⁶ On 13 February, he reported on his trip to Entebbe, with Bruno Delaye and La Sablière, to meet with President Museveni, who received them for more than three hours, and half of the conversation was devoted to Rwanda. It was there that the cease-fire was negotiated,

which the Rwandans then had to accept.¹⁸⁷ In addition, President Museveni agreed (underlined in the text) that the Security Council should be involved and that the joint Uganda/Rwanda border should be monitored by some thirty UN observers.¹⁸⁸ During this meeting, Colonel Delort continued:

He stated that it was true that his country was providing arms, instructors, and advisors, but stressed that there were no (word underlined twice) NRA soldiers in Rwanda. The RPF's money comes from diaspora contributions. He seemed concerned (very) about France's position in Rwanda and possible degrees of involvement. He returned twice to the subject very clearly.¹⁸⁹

It is as if the shield north of Kigali is a way of buying time and applying pressure until the Prime Minister and the President of Rwanda agree on the composition of the future government. The French delegation itself writes the communiqués of the Rwandan authorities:

We are still waiting for the joint communiqué between the President and the Prime Minister of Rwanda, which was prepared (with the delegation) during part of last night and which should show both signatures for the first time on a common text (quite good) - the FAR COS, back in Rwanda, has energized the troops with some success, but there are still many concerns, especially in the north of Kigali [...].*

If what was achieved in Entebbe is realized, I believe that it will be a respite under honorable conditions for the two political authorities in Kigali that we have tried to bring together by showing them the (real) gravity of the military situation and by momentarily pulling them out of their political scaffolding.

**But the Prime Minister refuses to use clear terms such as aggressor.¹⁹⁰*

The procedure for adopting the cease-fire communiqué in Kigali illustrates the proximity between the French and Rwandan decision-making circuits.¹⁹¹ In Paris, the results of a meeting on the cease-fire held in Kigali on 14 February were eagerly awaited at the same time as the meeting of the Rwanda crisis unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The next day, Colonel Delort gave information to the general staff by telephone.¹⁹² There was still no cease-fire at noon, the RPF was still active on the front and in the Ruhengeri region. It was not until the following day that the cease-fire was announced by the Rwandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁹³

3.2.2.2 OPERATION VOLCAN: MAJOR RESOURCES AND LIMITED EFFECTS

Operation Volcan, which lasted three days, between 21 and 25 February 1993, consisted of recovering the French and foreign nationals trapped in Ruhengeri by an RPF offensive and bringing them back to Kigali. Although it was decided on in an emergency, it was nonetheless the subject of very precise diplomatic planning in Paris.

The first concern was the evacuation of French nationals from Ruhengeri. As early as 8 February, 1993, a Noroît detachment was positioned at the entrances to the city:

Since 2 a.m. this morning, the RPF launched an attack in the direction of the town of Rubengeri, which was shelled with mortars. About one battalion of rebels is currently infiltrating the city where shooting continues, preventing any evacuation of foreign nationals.

A section of the Noroît detachment has taken up position 10 km south of the city to take advantage of a hypothetical lull in the fighting.

The foreign community amounts to about 90 people, including 21 French nationals, mostly civilian and military aid workers. 15 of them have been brought together in the same residence in view of a possible evacuation. The other six are at home, isolated by the fighting.

Telephone links with Rubengeri have been maintained, but electricity was cut off early this morning. The two power stations had fallen into the hands of the rebels [...].¹⁹⁴

The next day, Jean-Marc de La Sablière, while taking stock of the situation, informed the French ambassador in Brussels that an operation was being prepared to extract the nationals:

21 of our compatriots are currently stranded in Rubengeri where violent fighting is taking place. The decision was taken, given the risks incurred by these people, to send units from the Noroît detachment to the area to allow their emergency repatriation to Kigali.¹⁹⁵

He asked him to contact the RPF representative in Brussels to inform him of this and to specify the objectives, so that the RPF troops would allow the French units to pass through on their way out and on their way back.¹⁹⁶ On 10 February, 1993, Georges Martres presented the conditions under which the operation was to take place:

Faced with this prospect, a contact made with the RPF through the GOMN units in Rubengeri would perhaps allow our

nationals to evacuate smoothly, with the rebels allowing them to go to an agreed point where the Noroît detachment would be waiting for them.

But a more worrying hypothesis would be that the RPF would find it advantageous to hold the expatriate population hostage. It could use this to consolidate the territorial gains it has made and which President Museveni is encouraging it to keep (see TD Kampala 57). In this hypothesis, more energetic and direct action would be necessary, using more powerful means than those currently available to the Noroît detachment.¹⁹⁷

For the same period, the series of handwritten memos from Colonel Delort to General Mercier at the EMA provides more precise information on the details of the situation and certain diplomatic points. Firstly, they attest to the reality of the threat to the French people in Ruhengeri, who were held “hostage” in a town that was inaccessible to French forces for at least a day, and whose extraction was achieved thanks to a commando type intervention coupled with a provisional ceasefire with the RPF, obtained through the intermediary of General Opaleye of the GOMN.¹⁹⁸

Colonel Delort arrived in Rwanda as a matter of urgency on 9 February 1993 at 1 p.m. local time. In the evening, he sent a fax message to General Mercier, the first of a series that lasted until 22 February. The messages that were kept make it possible to chronicle an intervention that was both political and military. Delort met with the ambassador, the FAR COS, the Gendarmerie COS, the Noroît team, reinforced since the arrival of the 2nd RIMa commanding officer, and of course Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin, who was monitoring the situation on the ground, i.e., the main players. The colonel shared the concerns of the French ambassador, and he too considered the French people in Ruhengeri to be hostages for the RPF, which was trying to influence the degree of intervention by French troops. His account n°1 is interesting insofar as it characterizes the situation in terms that can legitimize French intervention: they are “the taking of hostages in Ruhengeri” and “the RPF offensive.”¹⁹⁹ The French wondered whether a commando action could resolve the situation. To prepare for any eventuality, Delort gathered resources on the spot. A company was ready to go to Ruhengeri, and the twelve men from Gabiro’s DAMI “momentarily unused in Kigali” could be retrieved. Before going any further, a contact with the local RPF is planned. However, the situation became critical with regard

to the safety of the nationals. Georges Martres reported that, while some French nationals were able to be evacuated, “the expatriate community in Ruhengeri has just spent a third night in the middle of the fighting. No casualties have been reported for the moment. But most of the foreigners are near the front line, on the RPF side.”²⁰⁰ Negotiations began between the French, President Habyarimana, who wanted the French troops to evacuate the MRND and CDR militants, the GOMN and the RPF, while the ambassador expected contact with the nationals in Ruhengeri to be broken off:

Contacts made with General Opaleye, commander of GOMN, give hope for a cease-fire between 3:00 and 4:30 p.m. to allow the evacuation of expatriates. This cease-fire would have received the agreement of the RPF, but the staff of the Rwandan Armed Forces considered its duration too limited, hoping to be able, at the same time, to get certain families of civil servants or soldiers threatened by the RPF out of Rubengeri. The latter obviously refused to link the two problems. For him, the evacuation of expatriates must be resolved separately, and he will not allow more than twenty vehicles to pass, the number estimated to be necessary to transport the foreigners.

*I intend to intervene as soon as possible with President Habyarimana to make him understand that it will not be possible to evacuate expatriates and Rwandans at the same time, at the risk of causing losses to both. The urgency is immediate, as the telephone will no longer work in Rubengeri before the end of the day.*²⁰¹

At the same time, the embassy recommended that all Gisenyi nationals withdraw to the Rwandan capital.²⁰² On 11 February, 1993, Georges Martres confirmed the success of the evacuation operation²⁰³ and on 15 February, he provided further details:

From the very first hours of the events, the military technical assistants stationed in the town gathered and comforted most of the French who were grouped together in a house, which then facilitated their evacuation. The DAMI Panda remained tirelessly close to the combat zone, taking every opportunity to determine the possibilities of access to the interior of the city. Finally, the Noroît detachment had to show initiative and daring, since the cease-fire agreed upon through the GOMN channel had not been respected, and the detachment commander, twenty minutes before the end of the deadline, had to decide to enter the town and recover our nationals even though the shooting had not stopped.

This deserves to be emphasized at a time when certain selective defenders of

*human rights are trying to sully the image of the French army in Rwanda.*²⁰⁴

In fact, the intervention reinforces the discourse that the French authorities have been making for the past two years: the men of *Noroît* are there to protect French and foreign nationals, just like the specialized units of *Noroît*. It illustrates the need to keep operational troops on site for operations aimed at the security of nationals. This is undoubtedly the reason why both the DAMI and the men of *Noroît* were engaged. In fact, the success of the evacuation is also due to the activity of an officer on the spot, in Ruhengeri. One will recall General Varret's reticence a few months earlier at the idea of positioning French trainers so close to the front. However, Colonel Cussac unreservedly highlighted the crucial role of Michel Fabries, technical advisor to the Ruhengeri gendarmerie school and responsible for the security of the French in this sector, in the success of the operation.²⁰⁵

It is interesting to note here that the main danger faced by this officer did not come from the RPF, but from firing by the FAR.

3.2.2.3 NOROÎT AS SEEN BY NOROÎT

How were the French forces in Rwanda represented during the intervention? The rushes of a report now preserved in the archives of ECPAD²⁰⁶ give us an idea of this. The "Noroît" video collection of ECPAD contains a series of rushes corresponding to a report made at the time of Operation *Noroît*, starting on 9 March, 1993. The images and the meetings with officers and soldiers are interesting in that they bear witness to the materiality of a strong operational commitment of the French army, in particular the deterrent that prevents access to Kigali from the north.

Moreover, the images shot in the refugee camps or with the ambassador bear witness to the communication constructed to report on *Noroît* within the military institution and, if necessary, beyond. It is a constructed and controlled communication. However, in these rushes, words or images escape control and tell the truth of the situation: for example, it appears that at the roadblocks north of Kigali, it is not infiltrated rebels who are intercepted but FAR soldiers who have left their unit with

their weapons without authorization. Note the identification of the RPF as the “enemy”: at least one soldier identified the rebels, the RPF and the “enemy” without hesitation. Moreover, in March 1993, Lieutenant-Colonel Robardey characterized the assassinations attributed to the RPF, which he sought to document with the help of the Rwandan authorities, as “war crimes and crimes against humanity.”^{206bis}

The interview with the commander of the operation (head of the 21st RIMa) repeats word for word the general instructions of Colonel Delort. It also illustrates the reactivity of French forces and the relevance of their positioning in Africa, and builds a coherent narrative of aggression-reaction-protection. To ensure the safety of French citizens by controlling the airport, “temporary blockades are set up, using semi-buried obstacles and maneuvering devices. This system will be activated on command at the same time as an evacuation operation is triggered.”²⁰⁷ The following shots precisely illustrate this system. The interview, repeated several times, shows a captain leaning on the hood of a jeep, map deployed, binoculars placed beside him; this does not seem to satisfy the camera operator. This is understandable, since the captain unintentionally indicates that his company is engaged in law enforcement and intercepts deserters from the FAR.²⁰⁸ The interview continues with a precise commentary on the map and the roads that are blocked.

Another reportage sheds light on exactly how cooperation with the Rwandan gendarmerie at the checkpoints is taking place.²⁰⁹ In the image, the captain being interviewed is on a wet asphalt road, with a spiked mat nearby that can be removed or replaced at will, and a corrugated iron hut on the side of the road with Rwandan and French flags.²¹⁰ The reportage on the MILAN group²¹¹ illustrates another way of blocking the road from the north. The 2nd Company of the 3rd RPIMa has set up a well-concealed MILAN firing post, whose function is to “block the town to the north.” There are two firing posts, state-of-the-art missiles and personnel who are constantly observing to inform the captain about the possible appearance of dangerous vehicles on the track:

*You see (he raises his arm) about 2 km away. The mission is to eventually block that route if enemy forces
uh (mumbles) show up. QU.*

So, the forces considered to be enemies are the rebels?

*A. Well, it's the rebels, a priori. For the moment the mission of the section is essentially one of observation and intelligence, but we are able to fire from the positions you have there on the road you see opposite.*²¹²

When asked about the rotation, he said he thought he would stay for two weeks or a month. The army camera operators then move to a mortar section. The vehicles arrive on the screen after a spectacular maneuver that highlights its mobility. It too is ready to fire if needed. The French captain who is to present the action of the French at the airport, on the other hand, is struggling. The young Rwandan lieutenant who is his counterpart replies consistently that he is happy to see the French, that their weaponry is good (they are “anti-aircraft machine guns”) and that he regrets not having night vision equipment. A Rwandan soldier perches on a piece of anti-aircraft defense in an unconvincing manner.²¹³

The following elements of the reportage illustrate more political aspects of the French intervention.²¹⁴ Without prejudging what the doctors usually do, this sequence, obviously improvised for the needs of the report, is devoted to the distribution of boxes of milk and medicine to children and the care of a child with scabies. The footage shows both the humanitarian action of the soldiers and the absolute destitution of the refugees. A mother cares for her child in a tiny hut made of branches, which gives an archaic image. The next sequence follows the refugees as they methodically clear a section of hillside. We then learn that the first refugees survive by plundering the sugarcane fields and devouring the meager resources of those who receive them. The contrast is vivid with the very organized camp in Rutare that the French officers visit in the following sequence. The displaced are grouped by village. The sub-prefect of Byumba represents them and is there, she says, to respond to their grievances.²¹⁵ This sequence repeats the themes of the Rwandan government's official communication: the cruelty of the RPF, which is responsible for this exodus, and the massacres it commits. Colonel Robardey, who is leading the visit of the other French officers to the camp, takes matters into his own hands by reminding viewers of certain principles: the witness must be questioned by the Rwandan gendarmerie in their own language, and then the

duly established report must be translated and transmitted, and the French will then be able to hear it.²¹⁶ In front of the French military camera, the Rwandan government stages its search for documentation concerning the “crimes of the RPF.” The last images are collected by the film crew in Kigali. A demonstration of women from Byumba and Ruhengeri, as authoritarian regimes know how to organize, takes place in front of the residence of the French ambassador.²¹⁷ Taking up the official discourse of violence against the Hutu, the demonstrators hold up signs to the camera that read, in French, “Byumba, no to genocide,” “Ruhengeri, no to the departure of the French troops,” and “the women displaced by the war thank the people and the French government.” The ambassador eventually came out and addressed them in careful French, immediately translated by a man with a loudspeaker. Hardly less surprising is the tea offered by a couple of Rwandan notables to some *Noroît* soldiers filmed in the following sequence; it must testify to the gratitude of the Rwandan people.²¹⁸

3.2.2.4 THE PESSIMISTIC ANALYSES OF THE FRENCH DEFENSE ATTACHÉ IN KIGALI

The quarterly summary reports of the defense attaché, written primarily for military intelligence purposes and in which he uses a certain freedom of tone, show that from January to September 1993, his analyses are increasingly pessimistic. The terms of the successive agreements signed with the RPF seemed to him to induce tensions in Rwandan society that could lead to the worst. From the beginning of 1993 (February-March 1993 report), Colonel Cussac described a fractured country where the more negotiations with the RPF progressed, the more the country became tense, worked up by members of the President’s party whose hold on the territory was still strong.

Distrust of the RPF

One of the leitmotifs running through the accounts of these three texts (the three quarterly reports that run from January to September) is that the RPF is not a reliable partner. That it has now become a respectable interlocutor in Arusha and elsewhere does not change anything. Military commitments - withdrawing troops, respecting a cease-fire

- always seem to the defense attaché to be in doubt. Therefore, in his eyes, the RPF is responsible for having violated the cease-fire on 8 February, 1993, “thus making a significant territorial gain.”²¹⁹ He does not even credit the RPF for sincerely wanting to protect the Tutsi. The Ruhengeri massacres of January 1993 were simply a pretext for the intervention: “On the morning of 8 February, taking as its pretext the inter-ethnic settling of scores that took place in the northwest of the country at the end of January, the RPF launched a generalized offensive.”²²⁰

And while the situation of the French troops seems to him to be in conformity with the law (France respected the timetable of the February cease-fire, withdrawing one company on 20 March and a second on 25 March), he believes that the same was not true of the RPF, “which left armed elements in the ‘buffer zone’, no doubt with the task of facilitating the return of the bulk of the forces in the context of a resumption of the offensive that it is trying to provoke by its excessive intransigence in Arusha.”

Biased perception of the massacres

The defense attaché also testifies to a biased perception of the persecution of the Tutsi. The targeted massacres against the Tutsi are thus described as inter-ethnic unrest and directly associated with political issues where the different parties are pitted against each other. Thus, the blockades, explosive attacks and grenade attacks are, in his eyes, only disturbances attributable to political rivalries. It was because the new government could not be formed, because of the demands made in Arusha (refusing to associate the extremist Hutu faction with the future transitional government), that the members of the various parties set up roadblocks.²²¹ As for the massacres in Ruhengeri, which were on an unprecedented scale and which in fact provoked the intervention of the RPF, in his eyes they were simply ethnic disturbances in which he refused to see the Tutsi as the only victims.²²² These analyses of the attacks against the Tutsi go hand in hand with the concern to mention the misfortunes caused to the Hutu population by the RPF’s military advance. He defines the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Hutu refugees as the humanitarian event that should be the focus of attention.²²³

In addition, the defense attaché interprets the role of the commission

of investigation, charged with noting human rights violations, which came to Rwanda between January 17 and 21, 1993, as biased.²²⁴ In a rhetorical twist, he even refers to the commission itself as the cause of the upsurge in unrest.²²⁵

A critical view of domestic politics

Colonel Cussac also produced an analysis of the internal political situation in Rwanda, which he felt was dominated by the emergence of the Coalition for the Defense of the Republic (CDR), which he aptly described as an “extremist Hutu party.” There is, he writes, an opinion among the elites, the political parties and the country that is hostile to negotiations with the RPF and it is in the process of being recomposed politically around a “Hutu extremist” party, the CDR.²²⁶ The vocabulary reflects a vision of Rwandan political life as brutal and fractured: some “withdraw with a bang,” others “represent only themselves.” The defense attaché then analyzes how the CDR does not want to be associated with the “inevitable” fall of the MRND, from whose presidency Habyarimana has resigned. He identifies the CDR’s positions as clear-cut, simple, and able to rally supporters in popular circles around opposition to the Arusha negotiations. The persistence of this party testifies, for him in any case, to the existence of a deep current of opposition to the discussions with the RPF within Rwandan society, expressed and channeled by the extremist Hutu parties.²²⁷

Moreover, Colonel Cussac seemed very skeptical about the negotiation process, which France nevertheless strongly supported. Negotiations were held in Dar-es-Salam and Bujumbura, but this was done in the absence of the former single party and against the will of the “extremist” party that had emerged from it. Thus, even the progress of the negotiations leaves him skeptical. As we have seen, on the military level, this concerns the cease-fire, the return of the belligerents to the line of 8 February for the RPF and 9 March for the FAR, as well as the promise of the departure of French companies. On the domestic front, several provisions also aimed to pacify civil society: “administrative and judicial sanctions against civil servants involved in the massacres,” the “suppression of harmful propaganda through the media or

meetings.”²²⁸ Finally, a gesture was made towards the displaced Hutu population: “appeal to the international community to come to the aid of the war displaced.”²²⁹

On all these points, the defense attaché thinks that France is heading for failure. On the one hand, he had no confidence in the RPF to seek peace; on the other hand, he considered that the one million Hutu war displaced persons had been abandoned to their fate; finally, he did not believe in the capacity of the UN or the OAU to quickly replace the French: “Hesitations, procrastination and, in fact, ineffectiveness are to be blamed on the UN and the OAU, the latter in particular having never been able to carry out the missions that had been assigned to it effectively.” Furthermore, the United States and Belgium are “behaving dubiously” and “their willingness to help Rwanda [is] suspicious.” In conclusion, there should be a return to the previous policy: a strong French military presence. “Only France seems likely to help this country while there is still time, without waiting for a ‘Somalization’ towards which we are moving and which would be irreversible.”²³⁰

This March 1993 report thus highlights a fracture in Rwandan society. French diplomats and, above all, the ambassador in Kigali - who changed in the spring - were at that time pushing hard for the Rwandan government to negotiate in Arusha and for new political conditions to be put in place while the actors were being hunted down. At the same time, a muted opposition to these prospects is developing in the country around the former single party and the CDR. The defense attaché, who through his contacts is close to the circles surrounding President Habyarimana, points out that the peace policy is coming up against an opposition that has the means to mobilize the country. It is not certain that he was listened to despite the impressive list of recipients of his report, first and foremost the Bureau of Military Intelligence, but also the General Secretariat of the Government (SGDN/EDS) and his colleagues in the embassies in neighboring countries.²³¹

3.3. DIPLOMATIC ADVANCE, POLITICAL COLLAPSE, MILITARY CONSOLIDATION (APRIL-JULY 1993)

The period from April to the beginning of August 1993 was marked by a diplomatic advance that culminated in the signing of the Arusha Accords. At the same time, the cohabitation led France to re-examine the conditions of its military presence in Rwanda, while the political situation on the ground deteriorated.

3.3.1 The turning point in February-March 1993

In the aftermath of the RPF offensive in February 1993, negotiations between the RPF and the Rwandan government resumed, leading to the so-called Arusha Accords on 4 August. However, behind this undeniable diplomatic breakthrough lay a profound deterioration in the country's political situation.

The RPF offensive of 5 February, 1993 turned the negotiations upside down. The balance of power became much more unfavorable to the government forces. The RPF offensive stopped 25-30 km from the capital, leading to fears that the Rwandan institutions would fall.

France and the development of a common Rwandan position at the UN Security Council

The purpose of the mission of Bruno Delaye and Jean-Marc de La Sablière to Kigali on 12 and 13 February, 1993, was to win over President Habyarimana and the Prime Minister, Dismas Nsengiyaremye, to a major French diplomatic initiative. After recalling that France had “done its utmost in terms of military technical assistance, equipment supplies and ammunition,” the two men announced the delivery of “50 machine guns requested and 105 mm shells” and discussed with the President “the hypothesis of recourse to the Security Council, which would present Rwanda as the victim of an external aggression, without, however, naming

Uganda.”²³² French diplomats pressured the Rwandan president and prime minister to accept the terms of the agreement,²³³ which included the Arusha Protocols already signed and “the commitment by both parties to end any blockage of the administration.”²³⁴ This agreement between the opposition and Habyarimana must not overshadow the tensions, which were very high, as Georges Martres noted after a meeting with Dismas Nsengiyaremye on 26 February, 1993.²³⁵ From 4 March, Catherine Boivineau also echoed these weaknesses as France stepped up its diplomatic efforts to obtain the effective implementation of the cease-fire agreed to by the two parties.²³⁶ At the same time, throughout the month of February, France also supported the idea of a UN resolution that would be requested by the Rwandan government.

It is important to look at the genesis of this resolution. In mid-February, France urged Rwanda to launch a diplomatic offensive designating Uganda as the aggressor.²³⁷ The French action was strong enough to convince the Rwandan authorities, as noted by the French ambassador.²³⁸ The fax sent by Boniface Ngulinzira, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, on 4 March, 1993, is however more moderate.²³⁹ RPF diplomacy was not inactive during those days in early March 1993.²⁴⁰ When Resolution 812 was adopted on 12 March by the Security Council, the main decisions taken were an appeal to the Government of Rwanda and the RPF to “respect the ceasefire that took effect on 9 March 1993,” as well as an invitation to the Secretary-General to seek ways of strengthening the peace process and “to consider the request of Rwanda and Uganda for the deployment of observers at the border between the two countries.”²⁴¹

The Bujumbura negotiations between the RPF and the Rwandan opposition (23 February – 2 March, 1993)

At the end of February 1993, several meetings were held in Bujumbura between the RPF and the parties of the transitional government.²⁴² France wished to avoid this tête-à-tête between the opposition and the RPF, as La Sablière indicated to Ambassador Martres,²⁴³ and the MRND refused to participate.²⁴⁴ The results were not as rich as the agenda had

suggested (the question of the violation of the cease-fire, the resumption of the Arusha negotiations, negotiations on the army, the role of the political parties in the return of peace to Rwanda, the setting up of institutions once peace had been restored).²⁴⁵ However, at the end of these meetings, an agreement was reached between the RPF and the opposition parties on a number of points discussed in a joint communiqué. After regretting the absence of the MRND in Bujumbura, the various members strongly criticized “the racist, regionalist, warmongering and dictatorial policies of President Habyarimana and his party. Furthermore, with regard to the cease-fire, the violation of which is blamed on the RPF and “organized terrorism” responsible for “genocides,” the parties demand that the government and the RPF respect their commitments, and that the modalities for their implementation be discussed in Dar-es-Salam.”²⁴⁶

The parties agreed on “the withdrawal of foreign troops and their replacement by a neutral international force organized within the framework of the OAU and the United Nations and with a humanitarian vocation.”²⁴⁷ The French ambassador in Bujumbura noted that the RPF seemed satisfied with these meetings, which made it possible to fuel a new round of negotiations.²⁴⁸ But also, the Bujumbura meetings show an empowerment of the opposition to Habyarimana and its ability to reach an agreement without the presidential party; in a way, they marginalize Habyarimana and make him no longer appear necessary. On the other hand, the attempts by certain Rwandan parties to approach the Belgian government to provide a military contingent to replace the French forces weakened France’s position in the conduct of the Arusha negotiations: from 15 to 25 March, they would concern the new national army; from 16 to 31 March, the refugee issue; from 1 to 8 April, the ancillary political issues.²⁴⁹

3.3.2 The return of the belligerents to Arusha (March-April 1993)

3.3.2.1 A FRENCH DELEGATION IN A FRAGILE POSITION

To follow the Arusha discussions, which resumed on 16 March, the French delegation was composed of Jean-Christophe Belliard, a diplomat from the Dar-es-Salam post and a Swahili speaker, and

Lieutenant-Colonel Gros. Unfortunately, the progress of the negotiations and the role of the French delegation are not known to us for lack of substantial documents in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We can only grasp a few moments. In his report of 17 April, 1993, Lieutenant-Colonel Gros noted that “useful advice was given to the government negotiators; indirect action through the intermediary of outside observers was taken to explain France’s position.”²⁵⁰ He emphasized the general slowness and “the little progress made in these negotiations.”²⁵¹ The activity of French diplomacy appears, however, to have been very limited in May and June 1993.²⁵²

3.3.2.2 THE SIGNING OF THE LAST ARUSHA PROTOCOLS ON 3 AUGUST, 1993

The memorandum of understanding between the government of the Rwandan Republic and the Rwandan Patriotic Front concerning the integration of the armed forces of the two parties was signed in Arusha on 3 August 1993. On the same day, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the two parties on the “repatriation of Rwandan refugees and the resettlement of displaced persons” as well as a third agreement. These last three protocols conclude the Arusha negotiations. Regarding the military component, the protocol signed is a 108-page text that regulates in detail the organization of this army. It is open to all Rwandans without distinction of ethnicity, region, sex, religion or language. The army was reduced to 13,000 men and thoroughly reorganized.²⁵³

Several points contributed to a change in the balance of power between the RPF and the Rwandan delegation during the Arusha process. The distribution of positions in the future army between the former FAR and the former RPF was the subject of numerous rumors and disinformation between the different parties in order to reach this compromise.²⁵⁴ The material conditions of the French Observation Mission “initiated at the request of Foreign Affairs” were sometimes problematic, particularly with regard to encrypted transmissions. During the new phase of negotiations in March-April 1993, the Inmarsat terminal broke down, particularly for encrypted reception.²⁵⁵ Without knowing whether the problem was related, it is noted in a fax of 29 March

that “M. Beillard (sic) does not envisage immediate reports to the AE via EMA and informs the ambassador in Dar-es-Salaam by PTI”²⁵⁶ It is also surprising to note that Jean-Christophe Belliard, an observer at the Arusha conference, but in fact an advisor to the Rwandan government delegation, has neither autonomy in terms of means of communication - which is the responsibility of the Ministry of Defense - nor autonomy in terms of information on the internal situation in Rwanda.²⁵⁷ The French diplomat is dependent on the military means of communication. He had limited information that he had to acquire with great difficulty. The communication of diplomatic telegrams was granted to him the following day.²⁵⁸

The report made by Colonel Gros on his return to Paris insisted on the danger represented by the imposition of “unacceptable” conditions.²⁵⁹ First, he points to the imbalance of power between the RPF and the Rwandan government delegation. The government delegation, he wrote, was in a position of weakness.²⁶⁰ The RPF, on the other hand, appeared to be in a position of strength, which he attributed to a very controlled strategy of negotiation based on the conquest of the terrain.²⁶¹ For the officer, the two sides did not have the same quality of diplomatic support: the Ugandan ambassador is presented as “a significant source of intelligence.”²⁶² Lieutenant-Colonel Gros is pessimistic about the future of the agreements. He wanted to warn of “the risks of a poorly negotiated peace agreement, the influence and the possibilities of confrontation between the decisions taken in Arusha and the position of a large part of the country and the army.”²⁶³

3.4. French diplomatic follow-up to the Arusha Accords (August 1993-March 1994)

French diplomacy, for its part, is committed to putting the agreements signed in Arusha into practice. One of the first reactions was that of Jean-Michel Marlaud, the French ambassador to Rwanda. Commenting on the Arusha Accords, in a diplomatic telegram dated 17 August, 1993, Jean-Michel Marlaud noted that “although the Accords provide for the establishment of transitional institutions

within 37 days of their signature, everything is in fact subordinate to the arrival of the neutral international force.”²⁶⁴ However, the United Nations Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not seem to be unanimous in its desire to see UN troops arrive. Thus, on 3 September, 1993, François Rivasseau²⁶⁵ signed a diplomatic telegram expressing the desire to limit the logistical preparations for the arrival of the UN contingents in the framework of the Arusha Agreement “in order to avoid the RPF taking the arrival of these men as a pretext for requesting a premature withdrawal of the French battalion,” and requesting that the UN resolution “closely define the mission of this first team.”²⁶⁶

The analysis of the assessment by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is difficult. There is no memo from the DAM for the month of August 1993. Those for September concern visits by Anastase Gasana, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and President Habyarimana.²⁶⁷ Finally, from 24 November 1993 to 6 April 1994, only four memos from the DAM were found, totaling nine typed pages.

The study of the Arusha process and agreements based on French primary sources offers several lessons. France promoted a process of dialogue between the Rwandan government and the RPF, a process that was carried out both through support for OAU initiatives, but also through national initiatives and, on occasion, the willingness to bring the issue of the conflict between the two parties before the Security Council. In this diplomatic power play, support for Zaire, or rather the reintroduction of Zaire into the international balance of power, was both a diplomatic lever and a French political objective. In this desire to promote a regional diplomatic balance but also to express its own will, there were undoubtedly tensions that could not be resolved. The failure of the MOF (French Observation Mission) is also the failure of a French diplomatic attempt. The support for the Arusha process and the first protocols ratified, in particular the one on the Broad-Based Transitional Government (BBTG) on 9 January, 1993, which would lay the foundations for a future democratic state, was accompanied by a desire to involve the CDR, a racist party, in the BBTG, in order not to weaken Habyarimana.²⁶⁸

France's influence on the negotiations was significant until the summer of 1992, when the discussions intensified and the GOMN gained in strength. The obligation imposed on France to withdraw some of its troops then changed the situation. Although it struggled to impose its solutions, the OAU was an important player, even if it was unable to ensure its will on the ground. For its part, between the summer of 1992 and March 1993, the RPF was able to strengthen its positions: by benefiting from American support; by mounting a successful military offensive starting on 8 February; and by pulling off a diplomatic coup in Bujumbura at the end of February and beginning of March 1993, which was able to counter the French strategy of raising the conflict to the level of the UN Security Council. One of the collateral effects of this power play between the RPF and France was undoubtedly to tear apart the internal opposition to Habyarimana.

Finally, an analysis of the implementation of French diplomacy reveals several elements. First, a central role in the beginning of direct negotiations between the Rwandan government and the RPF. Second, a form of effacing once the agreements were signed in August 1993. Finally, the study of the diplomatic decision, with the documents available, shows that the military structures, EMP and EMA, exerted an important influence on the diplomatic approach, concerning both the question of the MOF and on the orientations given to the French negotiator in Arusha.

3.5. COHABITATION: RETHINKING THE FRENCH PRESENCE?

On 21 and 28 March, French legislative elections were held and the right-wing party won. The general policy statement of the new Prime Minister, Édouard Balladur, on 8 April in the National Assembly, included a passage on the consequences of the end of the Cold War, which referred to ethnic confrontations.²⁶⁹ In it, he stated that France had a duty to protect its citizens and to protect the environment. He asserted that France had special responsibilities towards Africa and recalled the role of the UN. Does this mean a change of strategy in Rwanda? The issue on the agenda of the first core cabinet meetings of the cohabitation concerns several of the new ministers: François Léotard, Minister

of Defense, Alain Juppé, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Michel Roussin, Minister of Cooperation. They had to deal with advisors from the Élysée Palace who, at first, remained unchanged.

The situation in Rwanda is fragile. The coalition government on which the French were relying is falling apart. The military threat of the RPF, real or imagined, is putting pressure on France to maintain a protective presence, while the revelations of the human rights investigation are discrediting President Habyarimana, who had previously been seen as a guarantor of the country's unity and stability.

This context led to an intense reflection to propose a reorganization of the French presence in Rwanda that took into account the new context both in Kigali and in Paris. The memos and analyses preserved in the archives bear witness to the awareness of the deterioration of the internal political situation in Rwanda, which fueled the fear of a collapse accompanied by large-scale massacres.

3.5.1 The viewpoint of the general staff

At the beginning of April, the general staff in Paris developed a technical analysis of the situation in Rwanda that led to the idea that 1,400 men would be needed to defend Kigali.

3.5.1.1 PROSPECTIVE IN KIGALI, 15 MARCH 1993

This idea originated in a meeting held in Kigali in March 1993 on the occasion of the visit of the MMC, with a view to reflecting on new ways of strengthening the French military presence in Rwanda. On 15 March, Colonel Delort, Colonel Cussac and the head of the DAMI opted for a substantial reinforcement of the DAMI Panda, which would compensate for the departure of certain Noroît units, and a strong investment in the reinforcement of the FAR.²⁷⁰ The reason was always the same: the FAR were judged incapable of dealing with a new RPF offensive.²⁷¹ The question then arose as to the need to modify the missions of the DAMI Panda in order to deal with the most pressing problems: assistance to the EM/FAR in the areas of

intelligence, preparation and conduct of operations, operational watch on the front, and the retraining of some existing units. The number of French personnel in the DAMI Panda would increase at the same time as it would take over the “operational watch” functions performed by Noroît, moving away from its initial training missions. In addition, French instructors would move back to the north, where the two training sites of Gabiro and Mukamira would be reactivated, for very specific missions: “At Mukamira, technical training for the FSO would be carried out, as well as training for sappers and heavy weapons operators assigned to infantry units, and training for intelligence and action units on the enemy’s rear.”²⁷²

3.5.1.2 THE STAFF: THE ORIGINS OF THE 1,400 MEN

On 3 April, the EMA proposed very similar measures: to reinforce the FAR by increasing the number of French personnel devoted to training, operational assistance in order to improve indirect aid to the FAR, and to reinforce the DAMI by increasing the number of personnel in the various training detachments from 50 to 75.²⁷³ The reasons are clear: “There is now a window of vulnerability for the FAR.”²⁷⁴ Cooperation would pay: it would have to find the means to “make an additional financial effort.”²⁷⁵ The EMA would also like to be able to “intervene as a deterrent.”²⁷⁶ The novelty lies in the volume of forces that are planned to be sent to Rwanda: France, in fact, could deploy 700 men, if not 1,400.²⁷⁷ Finally, the Jaguars that had always been planned, but never deployed, reappeared, as did the Bangui companies, which were always ready: “The capabilities of the Bangui air detachment (Jaguar) could be called upon to provide support for the troops on the ground.”²⁷⁸

3.5.2 *Reflections of the new ministers in Paris (April 1993)*

In the various departments of the Ministry of Defense, as well as in Cooperation and Foreign Affairs, memos are multiplying to inform the new cabinet members and to try to influence the new policy.²⁷⁹ Most of them pleaded for a continuation of the current policy.

3.5.2.1 TWO PERCEPTIONS IN THE MMC

A budget for engagement

In the Military Cooperation Mission, on 1 April, 1993, a report on the “situation in Rwanda” proposed a strengthening of the policy.²⁸⁰ The statement can be summarized as follows: the RPF could attack; support for the Arusha process must be continued by putting pressure on the actors and increasing the cooperation budget, which had been depleted by the financing of ammunition for the FAR. The traditional explanatory schemes are thus mobilized in favor of the new team.²⁸¹ The memo mentions that in Arusha “the intransigence of the RPF, emphasized by all observers, could lead to a failure of the discussion and serve as a pretext for a resumption of the conflict.”²⁸² The main point of contention is emphasized, namely the differences over the percentage of RPA forces to be integrated into the new army.²⁸³ As far as the international organizations are concerned, the Military Cooperation Mission does not expect anything positive from them: the resumption of hostilities is likely.²⁸⁴ One can even “believe in an imminent resumption of the conflict,” i.e. war with French involvement.²⁸⁵ The recommendation made to the Minister was entirely political and diplomatic: the strongest pressure should be exerted to preserve the Arusha process and to accelerate the establishment of observers and UN peacekeeping forces.

General Varret's caution

General Varret, head of the MMC, seemed worried about the turn of events and tried to curb enthusiasm. On 5 April, he had a memo sent to him by telephone from Kigali, giving very precise figures for the number of Cooperation personnel present in Rwanda on short-term missions and AMT personnel.²⁸⁶ The next day, he sent his new minister, Michel Roussin, a memo to prepare the “Rwanda” core cabinet meeting at the Élysée. Written in a curious manner, it implied that, as head of the MMC, he would like to oppose the idea of reinforcement, but that he could not give him this advice because the Minister would then appear to be the only “opponent” of the temporary reinforcement

requested by the staff, no doubt supported by the Defense Ministry and the Élysée.²⁸⁷

General Varret paints a picture of a situation that can only seem surprising to the new minister: of the 75 non-commissioned officers and officers that military cooperation had placed in Rwanda, 55 of the DAMI had, he writes, gradually come under the effective authority of the general staff in Paris and/or - more surprisingly - under that of the private staff of the President of the Republic: "The use of these DAMI," he writes, "has progressively escaped us [sic] to the benefit of the EMA and/or the EMP."²⁸⁸ He therefore suggested that EMA-Cooperation coordination should better specify the mission of the 25 additional advisors that were proposed to be sent, and that a technical mission (Cooperation-EMA) should go on site to confirm the preliminary theoretical study. Finally, General Varret, with regard to the restructuring of the Rwandan army resulting from the Arusha agreements, points out that if this new cooperation is decided by the government, it would require other preliminary studies. Finally, he ends with a warning and a discreet call for diversification of cooperants: "It is not necessary to call on the 1st RPIMa alone to respond to this request for reinforcement."²⁸⁹

The question of the gendarmerie also reflects the historical position of General Varret, who was reluctant to make too strong a commitment. His services are thus a reminder of the modest nature of gendarmerie cooperation in Rwanda.

3.5.2.2 THE DISSONANT OPINION FROM THE DAS (10 APRIL, 1993)

There is only one resolutely dissonant opinion: that which comes from the Delegation for Strategic Affairs (DAS) at the Ministry of Defense. In Paris, indeed, reflections are underway. The archives of the Ministry of Defense preserve a long memo signed by Pierre Conesa dated 10 April, 1993, which aims to completely rethink the French presence and policy in Rwanda.²⁹⁰ This civilian administrator is from the same graduating class as the newly appointed diplomatic advisor to the Minister of Defense, Gérard Araud.²⁹¹ The memo, "*Plaidoyer pour un réexamen de la politique française au Rwanda*" ("Plea for a re-examination of French policy in Rwanda"), begins with a brief historical review and concludes that "the state of crisis is a constant in local political life."²⁹² Pierre Conesa proposes to question

France's choice to support Habyarimana and not to discuss with the RPF when the president is very attackable on human rights and "the responsibility for the breakdown of the cease-fire in February 1993 seems to be fairly equally shared."²⁹³ According to him, the reconfiguration of French policy is, on the contrary, urgent and necessary. He sees this as an opportunity to rethink the notion of external aggression, failing which France runs the risk of having to support dictators who are caught up in conflicts that are half internal and half border, as is the case with the Tuaregs or in Casamance.²⁹⁴ Returning to Rwanda, he points out that

*The regime in place is no more representative than the RPF and France can validly consider that the scenario does not fall within the framework of the 1975 military assistance agreement. The French troops are there exclusively to protect their nationals. Moreover, two international bodies are involved in the resolution of the conflict: the UN and the OAU.*²⁹⁵

The conclusion is clear: the new government resulting from the cohabitation could seize the opportunity to completely change its policy in Rwanda and make it the signal for a new African policy: "The Rwandan crisis is indeed a test, but probably more of our capacity to rethink our policy in Africa than of our will to support our traditional allies."²⁹⁶

3.5.2.3 THE POSITION OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS: LEAVING IN CASE OF A MASSACRE IN KIGALI?

At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, positions are also being revised and the Minister's new advisors are being informed. Jean-Marc de La Sablière, at the DAM (*Direction des Affaires africaines et malgaches*), wrote a memo for the Minister's office on 1 April, before a core cabinet meeting at the Élysée, which included some rather radical hypotheses.²⁹⁷ It explicitly mentions the possibility of a general massacre in Kigali.²⁹⁸ Faced with this prospect, the DAM emphasized that a too rapid withdrawal of French forces from Rwanda would then be seen as "letting our friends down."²⁹⁹ His

thoughts, which quite explicitly put forward the paradoxical situation of France, which has less and less interest in staying but which also considers leaving as a loss, were not immediately heard.

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3.5.3 *At the Élysée: from one core cabinet meeting to another*

Several core cabinet meetings held at the Élysée Palace at the very moment of the establishment of cohabitation were devoted, at least partially, to Rwanda. One can measure what happened to these various opinions. Overall, it is the “interventionist” line that seems to have been strengthened.

3.5.3.1 THE CORE CABINET MEETING OF 31 MARCH: THE LAST CABINET MEETING BEFORE THE COHABITATION

A core cabinet meeting was held on 31 March. A memo from Bruno Delaye of that day entitled “*Principales échéances internationales Afrique*” (Major international issues Africa)³⁰⁰ shows that the period was not conducive to decision-making. At the Élysée, the blocking of the Arusha process and the setting up of international observers were noted, as well as the failure of the RPF to respect the disengagement agreements. Hubert Védrine pointed out the memo, and François Mitterrand saw it, and asked for “no com[munication].”³⁰¹

A memo written in preparation for the next core cabinet meeting and signed by Jean-Marc de La Sablière summarized the situation.³⁰² The General Staff and the Coopération seem to have inspired the Élysée’s analysis both of the situation (the cease-fire on the ground was respected, the Arusha negotiations were at a standstill on military issues, and a new RPF offensive could not be ruled out) and of the proposals for the future military force. The hypothesis of 700 or 1,400 men, discussed by the General Staff and the Cooperation Department, was raised at the core cabinet meeting of 31 March.³⁰³ For the rest, the tools mentioned were those chosen months before: indirect diplomatic pressure on the RPF and recourse to the GOMN to monitor the border.³⁰⁴

3.5.3.2 THE CORE CABINET MEETING OF 2 APRIL: SOMETHING NEW WITH SOMETHING OLD

Preparations: General Quesnot reaffirms his positions

In preparation for the core cabinet meeting of 2 April, a memo on General Quesnot’s letterhead dated 1 April was brought to the attention of President Mitterrand, who indicated that he would read it after the Secretary General of the Élysée had been informed.³⁰⁵ This memo is based on the minutes of an interministerial meeting held just before

at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It takes stock of the blockages, taking up what has come from military and diplomatic channels. Militarily, the RPF has not really evacuated the buffer zone, the OAU observers are ineffective, and the FAR are unable to resist an attack. Politically, the situation has deteriorated: the Rwandan political system has broken down with the break-up of the government coalition: “The CDR (Hutu extremists) has left it, while the president has just stepped down as president of his party (MRNDD), which could collapse in the near future.”³⁰⁶ The Arusha negotiations were stalled over the composition of the future Rwandan army. “The RPF is demanding 45% of the force, while the Rwandan government does not want to go beyond 25%, a proportion that is already likely to cause major problems in getting the Hutus in the Rwandan army to accept it.”³⁰⁷ The memo identifies three objectives: to succeed in placing UN observers at the border, to place a hundred OAU observers in the buffer zone, and to succeed in assembling a UN force to take over from the French.³⁰⁸ To do this, a diplomatic offensive must be launched immediately at the highest level.³⁰⁹ On the military level, “in case the RPF goes on the attack again,” three possibilities will be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration:

- a) Withdraw our remaining troops now, taking advantage of the current lull (a question posed by Admiral Lanxade), without waiting for the deployment of UN forces, as provided for in the Dar-es-Salam agreement.*
- (b) Send new troops in case the RPF attacks? (c) Maintain our current strength in protection of the expatriate community. In the event that the situation is no longer tenable, evacuate them after ensuring the repatriation of our nationals.*³¹⁰

Nothing in this memo bears the mark of what would be a new policy, except perhaps the emphasis placed on the diplomatic dimension, and for the time being, nothing changes.

A core cabinet meeting of cohabitation

The verbatim of the core cabinet meeting of 2 April even shows that the new Minister of Defense, François Léotard, approaches the question with a determination that contrasts with the reservations of his

predecessor.³¹¹ The Minister advocates a reinforced presence and takes up the hypothesis of 1,400 men. The Prime Minister remaining very cautious on this issue, François Mitterrand moderates the plan. Indeed, respect for legality prevents any direct intervention as long as the country is not attacked by another State, and this is not the case: the solution is diplomatic and goes through the UN. The President therefore courteously invites the Prime Minister to take his responsibilities in this area.

Other documents in the presidential archives show how the position of the Élysée was recomposed around the diplomatic emergency.

3.5.3.3 THE AFTERMATH OF THE CORE CABINET MEETING OF 2 APRIL

The documents communicated to the President following the core cabinet meeting of 2 April show intense diplomatic activity, as there was no hope of succeeding in forcing the RPF to abandon the military solution. Thus, a diplomatic telegram³¹² submitted to the President for reading, mentions the accentuation of pressure on the RPF: “Either directly, or through Uganda, so that it respects the Dar-es-Salam agreements, renounces a military solution, and shows more openness in the negotiations in Arusha.”³¹³ The next diplomatic telegram,³¹⁴ also brought to the President’s attention, concerned action at the UN, where the French representatives insisted on the urgency for the UN to send observers to Rwanda. Telegram No. 8019, which was widely distributed in New York, in French embassies in Africa, in London and Brussels, and of course in the Ministry of the Armed Forces, summarized the French position on 2 April, 1993.³¹⁵ The content of the letter overlaps in many respects with the pessimistic assessment of the defense attaché in Kigali. It begins by noting the relative failure of the measures taken in Dar-es-Salam that were to lead to peace. The RPF remains a threat, but it is the radicalization of the Hutu extremists that is fueling the RPF’s escalation, according to this diplomatic telegram, even though the blame for the growing tensions

within the government is shared.³¹⁶ It is therefore proposed that diplomatic pressure be put on the RPF, either

directly or through Uganda, to “respect the Dar-es-Salam agreements, renounce a military solution and show more openness in the Arusha negotiations.”³¹⁷ The file also contains information from a TD of 5 April from the military attaché in Kigali and the ambassador.³¹⁸ The “assessment of the situation” that concludes their analysis reflects the anxiety that reigns in Kigali, where it is expected that military operations will resume before the arrival of the international force.³¹⁹

Thus, President Mitterrand followed day by day the evolution of the situation in Kigali, which all observers agreed was unstable. He was therefore informed of the remarks made by President Habyarimana during a dinner with Ambassador Martres.³²⁰ According to Martres, the Rwandan president had not changed: he still considered the RPF an enemy with whom one could not negotiate, and he was also counting on direct French involvement and substantial arms deliveries for protection.³²¹ He did not fail to speak to the ambassador about the second battery that had been promised to him – as noted earlier, the question of this promise had agitated the French staff throughout the previous autumn.³²²

At the core cabinet meeting of 7 April 1993,³²³ it was decided that, since the Coopération was to finance the new operations, it was authorized to go and see what was happening on the ground. Prime Minister Édouard Balladur began to think that there were “several” files on Rwanda which he would like to know more about.³²⁴

3.5.4 The situation in Kigali deteriorates, April-July 1993

Between April and August 1993, French policy shifted decisively towards the diplomatic route, marked by the desire to have peace agreements signed and to bring in UN troops to replace the French military presence. A new ambassador in Kigali was appointed, who cautiously followed in the footsteps of his predecessor. The priority being the signing of peace agreements, France supported the government, which was the only entity that could do so, while hoping that President Habyarimana would be able to control the “extremists” in his party, who were becoming more and more threatening. What is actually happening is the disengagement of the parties and, above all, the collapse of the State.

3.5.4.1 ALL-OUT PROPAGANDA

The period was marked by an intensification of propaganda and disinformation campaigns from Kigali. All kinds of pressure were brought to bear, and the Élysée Palace was the point of convergence for information from various sources and in various forms: letters, messages and petitions. For example, Guy Penne,³²⁵ a senator for the French abroad, who had carried out a mission to Kigali on 23 and 24 March, informed Bruno Delaye by fax that the French in Rwanda wanted to keep French troops, as the political fracture that divided the country also affected them.

The fear that France would change its policy was present in certain circles in Rwanda. A message from the French embassy on 3 April, 1993, relayed a kind of petition signed by intellectuals, businessmen, etc., who seemed to be addressing President Mitterrand (they referred to “the left”), asking France not to leave on the occasion of “the election of the right in France.”³²⁶ An “open letter from civil servants and agents of public and private companies” was addressed to Édouard Balladur, asking France not to abandon Rwanda.³²⁷

The Hutu ruling circles in Rwanda are putting pressure on the Élysée not to lose the support they consider essential, which has been undermined by the revelation of their responsibilities in the massacres. They want to highlight the abuses committed against the Hutu in order to establish a sort of balance. The Élysée archives thus preserve a communiqué from ORINFOR, the official information office of Rwanda, dated 4 April, 1993, entitled “Rwanda-Uganda-Human Rights,” which refers to testimonies of peasants “on the atrocities committed by the RPF, and by the Ugandan troops and civilians who accompanied them,” accompanied by a lengthy testimony.³²⁸ Moreover, Hutu circles are campaigning for UN intervention, and the ambassador announced the arrival in Paris of “Hutu nationalists close to the presidential movement”:³²⁹ they do not trust their own ambassador to organize meetings, and they are well aware of the places of power in African politics in Paris, since they asked to be received at the DAM, at the Ministry of Cooperation, and by an advisor to the

presidency, which Bruno Delaye asked Dominique Pin to do. On 6 April the ambassador reported the existence of an “open letter” from academics in Butare addressed to the members of the Security Council, denouncing the attitude of the RPF and asking for UN intervention. He quotes the entire two-page document and recalls the extent to which it illustrates a fundamental movement in Rwandan society.³³⁰

The archives of the General Staff in Paris also preserve short documents without headers, a kind of tract that the tone and themes identify as part of the propaganda operation of Hutu nationalist circles. They undermine the very possibility of reaching an agreement in Arusha by casting suspicion on all RPF intentions.

The multiplication of these documents is not a coincidence. A message from the ambassador shows that Hutu nationalist circles, close to the presidency,³³¹ have decided to respond to what they call RPF propaganda, which they consider to be very professional and which observes methods developed in the West, and at the heart of their mechanism is the creation of Radio des Mille Collines.³³² For the ambassador, these various pamphlets, discourses and communiqués are a response to the diplomatic isolation of the Rwandan delegation in Arusha. And the strategy of highlighting crimes or massacres committed by the RPF to somehow balance or erase the abuses committed against the Tutsi is systematically applied.

3.5.4.2 GOVERNANCE IN TATTERS

All elements of governance in Rwanda are in a fragile state. Internally, there is virtually no effective government. Former Prime Minister Dismas Nsengiyaremye had to leave the country on 31 July, unable to hold on to his post. The French protected him until the last moment by driving him to the airport. Faustin Twagiramungu, Prime Minister of the Broad-Based Transitional Government, was rejected by his own party. As a result, on 18 July a minimal agreement was reached on the name of Agathe Uwilingiyimana, Minister of Secondary and Primary education. Political assassinations are numerous and the refugee crisis is aggravated by “the racketeering carried out by certain military or administrative

officials.” The prisons no longer play their role: it is possible to escape by bribing the jailers or even the director.

President Habyarimana's concerns

Two invitations to a private dinner extended to the ambassador by President Habyarimana allowed Georges Martres to gauge the concerns of the head of State and his desire to see the support that France was giving him personally, reaffirmed.

On 5 April, Habyarimana, no doubt worried about the consequences of the political change in France on relations between the two countries, invited the ambassador, his wife, and the heads of the French military presence in Rwanda to dinner.³³³ For military support, the president, whose vocabulary is always the same - the RPF are rebels - tirelessly makes the same demands: a strong French presence. He regretted the departure of the two companies and hoped to see three return. He asked for arms deliveries and especially for another battery of 105s.³³⁴ Georges Martres' responses are usually dilatory, but this time there is a nuance: is President Habyarimana really sure that he controls his troops? If the Rwandan government multiplies its hostile statements, France will leave. The president says that at least one party, the MDR, is attached to the presence of France.³³⁵ However, it is the way in which the report on the violation of human rights implicates him personally that is the most important topic of the evening. President Habyarimana brought it up at the beginning of the meal by mentioning the cabinet meeting devoted to the response and saying that, despite a modest result, he was happy to have asserted some authority over the ministers and the ambassador encouraged him to do so.³³⁶ He returned to the question at the end of the evening:

3/ the head of State alluded late in the evening to the accusation made against him by the journalist Janvier Afrika and which the report of the international commission of investigation held to implicate the president himself in the outbreak of the Bagogwe massacre.³³⁷

The ambassador, here, is willing to give credit to the president.³³⁸

At the end of April, Ambassador Martres is on his way out. President Habyarimana invites him to a final private dinner on 23 April, which the ambassador scrupulously records.³³⁹

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A new question emerges: if President Habyarimana were forced to leave, would France protect him? In addition, he would like Georges Martres to continue to serve as an “intermediary” to “explain” the situation to the highest French authorities, “especially on the ethnic level.”³⁴⁰ The “Commentary on the Post” section makes it possible to hear a voice that has hardly been heard, that of the first secretary Bunel. Freer than his former ambassador, he envisages that the death of Habyarimana and the success of the Hutu nationalists could, at some point, be linked.³⁴¹

The “Letter of the parties”, 27 May

President Habyarimana has reason to be concerned. The publication of the report on human rights in Rwanda had devastating effects. First, it broke up the fragile government coalition. The copy of the open letter that the leaders of the MDR, PSD and PL parties (with the penciled-in words “legal opposition”) sent to President Habyarimana was forwarded by the ambassador to Paris.³⁴² This text describes a situation that could in some ways be considered pre-genocide, since it notes the involvement of state services and the administrative hierarchy as well as certain elements of the army in the application of violence targeted at an ethnic group - to which the letter at times associates “political opponents.”³⁴³ The list of massacres brings together in a coherent and significant whole events that had previously been considered by the embassy as isolated and condemnable, but not as part of a system.³⁴⁴ The letter expressly charges President Habyarimana and his entourage for the recent events in the Ruhengeri region.³⁴⁵ It also accuses him of having orchestrated the dismantling of the justice system so that investigations could not be traced back to him or his regime.³⁴⁶ This statement is accompanied by the threat of the end of the government coalition in Rwanda.³⁴⁷ The French are seen as a problem because they protect the person of the President of the Republic, his family and his close friends, leaving ordinary Rwandans defenseless in the face of the “dictator.”³⁴⁸ The other problem the ambassador faces is the questioning of French military assistance in several dimensions.³⁴⁹

The instructions given to Ambassador Marlaud

In mid-May 1993, a new French ambassador arrives in Kigali, Jean-Michel Marlaud. The archives do not say what prompted the Quai d'Orsay to replace Georges Martres at this precise moment. His assignment had initially been extended for three months after December 1992 following the specific request of President Habyarimana. The instructions that the new ambassador receives, dated 17 May, 1993,³⁵⁰ place his action in the context of continuity rather than a break with the past, although with a few inflections.

The instructions deal first of all with the position to be adopted with respect to the Arusha negotiations. The ambassador was asked to give priority to the issue of border observers. France, which supported the position of the Hutu government, was clear about its consequences: "to hinder the supply of arms and ammunition to the RPF from Uganda and thus reduce the risks of a new offensive." On the question of the percentage of positions in the future army, no figure is given, "the rebels are demanding that they participate up to 45%." It will be necessary to be attentive to the negotiation of the return of displaced persons, to advocate for elections to be set as soon as possible: this is the mark of a democratic country. The issue of threats specifically to the Tutsi is not addressed: the ambassador will simply have to "be attentive" to human rights and inter-ethnic issues, and he will emphasize France's concerns on this point as necessary.

The passage in the instructions concerning forward-thinking is more puzzling. Was the new ambassador supposed to find ways to get France out of its predicament, or even to reverse its alliance? He must in fact "reflect on the position that our country should adopt as well as its medium and long term interests at the end of the Rwandan crisis, knowing that we are careful not to favor either of the two ethnic groups."³⁵¹

Close political relations

The instructions given to Ambassador Marlaud also mention the "close political relations" that France has

with Rwanda, as shown by the many private visits made by its president to his French counterpart, a list of which is given.³⁵² The account of the last few years stresses that France has tried to “dissuade the RPF from continuing its attack” but has also sought to “obstruct the FAR’s possible recapture plans” and the French army in Rwanda “receives the approval of the internal opposition parties.”³⁵³ The ambassador must not have any other goal in mind than the establishment of a lasting peace, and he receives clear signals that he must not weaken the French military presence. On the one hand, he must report continuously on any element that would affect the French presence in Rwanda. On the other hand, when he sends his proposals, he will keep in mind the stabilizing and dissuasive role (in other words, he will not propose a withdrawal). He will remember to always justify the French presence by the need to preserve the security of its nationals, the stability of Rwanda (and therefore the retention of its president) and the stability of the region (threatened by the RPF). The importance of cooperation in general is emphasized, as is the fact that France wants a gendarmerie in Rwanda and not a police force as the RPF would like, the gendarmerie being “an essential element in the construction of the rule of law.”³⁵⁴

On the verge of collapse: French military readings of the situation in Rwanda

What is the French military doing in Rwanda between May and August 1993? Paradoxically, there have never been so many of them and yet officially nothing is happening. In practice, incidents are increasing at the border and the attacks cause insecurity, but despite the rhetoric attributing them to the Tutsi, they are not acts of war.

A mission was sent to the area in April to clarify the reorganization of the DAMI.³⁵⁵ Tensions once again arose between Coopération and the general staff,³⁵⁶ who referred to a “coop circuit” that escaped them when the French troops from the DAMI returned to the north at Mukamira. The general staff considered the 1st RPIMa the ideal tool for its intervention,³⁵⁷ which took over in July.³⁵⁸

The weekly reports that the officer

commanding the DAMI Panda sent to his superiors in April and June provide an insight into how the French soldiers viewed their action and its context: they testify to a tense situation and maintain the idea of a possible imminent attack by the RPF. Only two of these reports are present in the SHD archives. The first covers the week of 19 to 25 April, 1993: the deterioration of the FAR has not been halted and the population of the buffer zone seems to be accommodate the RPF very well, especially since there is no trace of concrete offensive actions by the RPF, even if the attacks are attributed to it.³⁵⁹ The report from the beginning of May describes a tense situation with attacks, clashes at the border, and ethnic unrest.³⁶⁰ The duplicity of the RPF is highlighted and discussions confront the FAR with unacceptable options.³⁶¹ The report by the head of the DAMI in the north describes a kind of armed peace with numerous French patrols. As for the attacks, the French officer attributed them without hesitation to the RPF on the basis of the origin of the ignition system, and he did not question possible manipulation, for example by opposition circles.³⁶²

This analysis by the officer commanding the DAMI is similar to that of Colonel Cussac for the period April, May and June 1993. In his report, the situation is overshadowed by the threatening shadow of the RPF: there is not an event that, in his eyes, does not mark an advance by the RPF, a success to be credited to it, or a new threat on its part.³⁶³ The deplorable state of the FAR and the impotence of the EM/FAR to reform the army contribute, by contrast, to the prestige of the RPF, which is much more disciplined in the territories it occupies,³⁶⁴ and he forwards the list of attacks that he attributes without hesitation to the RPF.³⁶⁵

The fragility of the situation as a result of the peace agreements is increasingly being taken into account in military analyses. Thus, on 10 June in Paris, Colonel Delort sounds the alarm in a handwritten note entitled “Rwanda: a dangerous agreement”:

Note: this agreement for the army is a severe defeat for the governments. I think that a part of the army (the efficient part) will not accept it and that we must fear reactions that could go as far as an attempted coup d'état. This attempt would ipso facto lead to a general attack by the RPF [...].

If a transition is to be attempted in the manner that is being prepared, President Habyarimana must be influenced to moderate the Hutu extremists (civilian and military).³⁶⁶

These analyses are repeated in the defense attaché's report: the agreement is unfair, unacceptable to the FAR leaders and certain Hutu circles. If France withdraws its troops, massacres will begin and the RPF will attack.

The peace agreement, signed on 4 August, 1993 between two parties in conflict, after three years of confrontation, contains both the hopes of an entire people and the seeds of future confrontations.

The situation of the RPF, and therefore of the Tutsi ethnic group, is out of all proportion to the percentage it represents in the country. [...] if these precautions are not taken, these countries will have to expect to see a resurgence of confrontations, but this time among a population that is expected to reach 20 million people in twenty years.³⁶⁷

In his argument, we can see old elements that were already present in 1990 and that are permanent in General Quesnot's analyses at the Élysée Palace: the question of the percentage (of ethnic groups in the population), for example, but also more recent questions such as the feeling of dispossession that generates bitterness and a desire for revenge among Hutu army officers, who could potentially be deprived of their commands. The colonel is also unfavorable to the departure of the French troops, because he believes that only by maintaining the French presence could the application of the Arusha agreements prevent the country from sinking into chaos. Dismas Nsengiyaremye, the former prime minister, had to leave the country on 31 July because he was unable to maintain his post. In addition to the increased instability, there have been political assassinations.³⁶⁸ The country is thus, in the eyes of the colonel attached to the Ministry of Defense in Kigali, in a desperate situation, without leaders, without financial resources, without internal security. Its army has, in part, turned into a band of looters and no longer obeys the government.³⁶⁹

3.5.5 The laborious implementation of the Arusha Accords (August-December 1993)

The second part of the autumn of 1993 should be a path towards a steady improvement in the situation: the peace accords were

signed, and the RPF sent a letter of thanks to France.³⁷⁰

Excellency,

I have the honor to present my compliments to you, on behalf of the RPF, and to express my most sincere thanks for the role played by France as observer in our negotiations. [...]

This agreement is a historic event for all the people of Rwanda, the beginning of a new era of respect for human rights, rule of law and peace, but we remain aware of the major challenge that its implementation represents. [...]

Your Excellency, France and the RPF have not always shared the same point of view regarding the position of the French government in this conflict. However, we remain convinced that France's full support for the implementation of the Arusha Agreement should enable the Rwandan people to realize their aspirations for the rule of law, democracy and development.

Your Excellency, allow me to take this opportunity to reiterate our gratitude and to assure you of the RPF's full commitment to the implementation of the Arusha Peace Agreement. [...]

The French disengaged, satisfied that they could do so, but not without trying to mobilize the international community, particularly the United States, through a personal letter from François Mitterrand to Bill Clinton.³⁷¹ The UN forces finally arrived on the ground. A hope for peace seemed to be emerging. But it was not to be. The situation was in fact fraught with threats. None of the terms of the agreement signed in August have been implemented. The economic situation is deteriorating and Western pressure is making things worse, the FAR command is practically seceding.

3.5.6 The military question

3.5.6.1 Disengagement, how?

The decision to disengage militarily from Rwanda was a consensus, provided that the transition to UN forces was made and that the impression was not given of abruptly abandoning the country and its president. In August, the decision was taken at the Élysée in a core cabinet meeting, which was confirmed by the general staff, and the Defense attaché, on site, examined the way to proceed.

3.5.6.2 A DECISION BY A CORE CABINET MEETING (4 AUGUST)

At the Ministry of Defense, they were ready to end *Noroît*. A memo from the Minister's office to the Prime Minister identifies the conditions for the departure of *Noroît*: "normally" when the Blue Helmets arrive, within 37 days of the Arusha Accords, or more quickly, if the RPF detachment that is to be installed in Kigali arrives. "In any case, the two companies must leave."³⁷² The Prime Minister, alerted by his military cabinet, gave his agreement:

*Defense proposes that the withdrawal of our two companies stationed in Kigali ... be carried out according to the following scheme: - Withdrawal of one company at the signing of the Arusha agreements, which should take place in the first few days of August; withdrawal of the whole company: - either at the arrival of the neutral international force; or in the event that an RPF battalion enters Kigali with the agreement of the Rwandan government. This scheme is consistent with our desire to disengage from Rwanda at the moment when an agreement is about to be signed, but a formal agreement at your level will be essential when the conditions for implementation are met.*³⁷³

As we have seen, these provisions were agreed upon by the Defense Cabinet, but at the end of August, the UN peacekeepers had still not arrived. Since the French could not leave before their arrival, the question was dealt with by the Defense Cabinet.

3.5.6.3 IN SEARCH OF PEACEKEEPERS

On 4 September, the search was still on for volunteer countries to send peacekeepers to Rwanda. At the Élysée Palace, the United States was reluctant and Great Britain was openly hostile.³⁷⁴ The action of Alain Juppé, Minister of Foreign Affairs, converged with the wishes of the President, who had been insisting for months that the UN intervene. On 6 September, 1993, an unsigned memo from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reviewed the military consequences of the agreements signed in August. It provided for disengagement, but subject to the arrival of the UN force, which it was feared would be delayed.³⁷⁵ The whole thing is in line with the policy pursued up to that point: the presence of *Noroît* is considered to be an element of stability, all the more valuable because the presence of the RPF battalion in Kigali is stirring up fears.

However, it was in Rwanda that an initiative nearly brought down the edifice patiently built by diplomats. A weekly update on the situation in Africa³⁷⁶ on 7 September 1993 reported to President Mitterrand that the prospective prime minister of the future broad-based government had imagined a solution in which the RPF would not enter Kigali and French troops would remain. It is quite possible that President Habyarimana will support him behind the scenes. But France does not want this type of solution at any price. There is a risk that the war will resume and France may not be able to repatriate its troops as the general staff wishes. The initiative fizzled out making the search for partners to set up a UN mission all the more urgent. The deadline is 10 September 1993.

3.5.6.4 WITHDRAWING NOROÏT TO KIGALI

The months of September and October are entirely occupied by waiting for the Blue Helmets who are expected to take over from the GOMN and, in a way, from the French. The new perspectives force the French command, while waiting for an order to completely withdraw Noroît that did not come, to rethink the configuration of the field force. This reconfiguration was based on a pessimistic analysis of the political situation.

In the summer of 1993, the defense attaché considered that he had to at least reconfigure the Noroît system. The Arusha Accords and the relative calm in the north made the posture of defending the border and preventing access to Kigali from the north obsolete and somewhat of a provocation. On the other hand, the increase in insecurity could justify stronger measures for the protection of French nationals residing in Kigali and their possible evacuation via the airport. He presented his project on 30 August under the title "Proposal for a change in the position of the Noroît peripheral company."³⁷⁷ The response of the staff, preserved in the form of an annotation to the document that was sent to him, was wait-and-see: "In my opinion, this is not the right time to change the position (possible political interpretation of the movement, possible disengagement in the short term...)." ³⁷⁸ In the advantages, are "political significance - more coherent use of the Noroît detachment -, and logistical gains in the daily life of

the peripheral unit.” Indeed, the latter were not organized to stay in the field for long, and the proximity of the French camp to the Méri dien hotel in Kigali offered advantages in terms of stewardship.

On 7 September, the position to be taken for Noroît was studied should the Arusha agreements were be implemented.³⁷⁹ In the scenarios proposed, one can note the installation of a COS detachment at the embassy with adequate means of transmission and armament. This should be completed by units (notably COS) on alert outside Rwanda. A handwritten note by the general staff in Paris was added “Seen, to be kept on hand for the days to come.” This proposal should probably be seen as an attempt by the EMA to introduce a new actor into the system. The COS, which was created the previous year, is a joint command reporting directly to the CEMA and employs, among others, the 1st RPIMA. Thus, with this proposal, the EMA is attempting to organize what appears to be a withdrawal of the French special forces in Rwanda from the supervision of the Cooperation Ministry, in order to repatriate them under that of the Armed Forces. In fact, since the government has not been formed, another scenario was adopted for the time being: the redeployment of Noroît for security missions in Kigali.

The hypothesis of a collapse of the security situation and a political disintegration of Rwanda was specified in a document signed by Colonel Cussac, dated 15 September, 1993, and based on the notion of “threat level.”³⁸⁰ This new master plan was drawn up after the redeployment of the Noroît detachment in the city of Kigali, envisaging threat levels up to and including an invasion of Kigali.³⁸¹ This analysis, carried out in September 1993, thus marked the end of the strategic organization put in place in October 1992 by General Quesnot. Whether or not to hold the front line was no longer important; the danger was now in Kigali and it was the civil war, not the external war, that threatened.

The withdrawal of troops to Kigali was accepted in Paris: the EMA gave its agreement, subject to the opinion of the ambassador, given the political risks involved, because, the ambassador was told, this new arrangement should “not to be subject to any interpretation by either side, if it is accepted.”³⁸² The EMA did, however,

ask that “a mobile surveillance system to the north of the capital be maintained,” which the ambassador agreed to.³⁸³ In fact, in September, the EMA asked that the new system be maintained. In fact, in this month of September, the French were very cautious about the visibility of their presence in Rwanda. When Ambassador Marlaud undertook to update the census of the French, he wanted the help of an officer from Noroît who was competent in cartography and who would go in civilian clothes to the south of the country (no officer would go to Ruhengeri³⁸⁴). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs replied that a Noroît officer could only travel in uniform and refused.³⁸⁵ No detachment would even go to the south.

3.5.6.5 THE BLUE HELMETS ARRIVE: NEW DEADLINES

The adoption of Resolution 872 on 5 October, authorizing the deployment of an international force in Rwanda, considerably changed the situation. This is a success for France, who wanted the UN to be involved, but difficulties lie ahead.

3.5.7 The political question

In October 1993, President Habyarimana, satisfied that the UN had decided to send peacekeepers, but anxious that the French soldiers should not leave, held a series of meetings at the highest level in Paris.

3.5.7.1 PRESIDENT HABYARIMANA IN PARIS

On his way back from New York, President Habyarimana stopped in Paris. He came to verify that he still had France’s support, and it was not certain that his interlocutors had the same positions at the Élysée and in the ministries. He was accompanied by James Gasana, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

President Habyarimana visited the Minister of Defense, François Léotard. It is unfortunate that we do not have the entire file or the minutes of the meeting, as we were unable to consult François Léotard’s archives. However, the EMA was asked for the memos that prepared the minister’s meeting with the Rwandan president.³⁸⁶ The preparatory memo points out to the Minister both the importance of the French military presence in Rwanda and the fact that it is designed to respond to an attack that is always

perceived as imminent. The information is more about continuity than rupture: the history of the French presence associates the fluctuation in the number of soldiers with RPF “attacks”.

During this trip, President Habyarimana met with President Mitterrand on 11 October.³⁸⁷ A memo of 8 October, without author’s name (probably by Bruno Delaye), with numerous annexes prepared for this occasion, reveals who, after six months of cohabitation, decides on African policy and how recommendations and information are circulated.³⁸⁸ As the Rwandan president visited the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Cooperation and the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Bruno Delaye took stock of the situation with each of them. For example, at the General Staff, there is a desire to disengage from Rwanda and resources are ready to be allocated elsewhere. A memo from the Quai d’Orsay, from Jean-Marc de La Sablière, completed President Mitterrand’s information on current events in Rwanda.³⁸⁹ His presentation of the country’s domestic situation is very pessimistic: “the economic situation is desperate, recovery measures could only be taken by a strong government, but the prime minister in charge is already being challenged, the army is in disarray. There is no mention of the massacres perpetrated against the Tutsi. In fact, it is the arrival of the Blue Helmets that will make it possible to set up a government, but the deadlines are far away: three or four months.”³⁹⁰

President Habyarimana was to be somewhat disappointed, however. France’s policy for the months to come was clearly stated: withdrawal of the contingent based in Kigali when the Blue Helmets arrived, and reconfiguration of military cooperation on the narrow basis of the pre-1990 situation, centered on the gendarmerie. On the other hand, France will be involved in the civilian aspects of the transition to a truly democratic state (support for the rule of law, assistance to refugees and returnees, demobilization) and in the search for financial resources from the IMF. The memo ends with a warning:

*This support is strictly conditional on compliance with the peace agreements.
In the area of military cooperation, the President may mention the need to adapt our system to the new context. We hope that the enlarged transitional government will determine as soon as possible what it expects from France (the RPF’s position on maintaining this type of cooperation*

*with us is not clear); in any case, we do not intend to go beyond the cooperation that existed before the October 1990 offensive, which essentially concerned the gendarmerie, with about twenty cooperants.*³⁹¹

The biography of President Habyarimana, as transmitted to President Mitterrand in October 1993, is also interesting, because the Quai d'Orsay is still counting on his ability to "carry out reforms," a singularly vague expression, by relying on his popularity with the Hutu in the north and with Christian democratic circles in Belgium. There is no trace in this memo of his loss of influence to the extremists in his party as described in the Defense attaché's memos from about the same time. But the tone of the last sentence sounds like a warning: if President Habyarimana is not capable of guaranteeing the viability of the chosen policy, then his political future is not assured, even on the side of his French friends, or so the Ministry of Foreign Affairs thinks.³⁹²

In October 1993, the Quai d'Orsay was far from convinced that President Habyarimana had the capacity to carry out the chosen policy by controlling the situation in his country. A diplomatic telegram signed by Jean-Marc de La Sablière and sent to a large number of diplomatic posts on 20 October, 1993,³⁹³ stated "The purpose of this telegram was to inform all actors of the position adopted by France after the visit of the Rwandan president. The Director of African and Malagasy Affairs analyzed the situation as follows: if the adoption of Resolution 872 was a success for France, the transitional government with a broad base could not be put in place until after the arrival of the Blue Helmets, which would not be complete until December at the earliest. A period of great danger is opening up: The opposition parties, which are expected to form a government, are "undermined by internal quarrels," the Armed Forces are threatened by "indiscipline and desertions" and are contributing to insecurity in the country; the economic situation is desperate because of the burden of military spending and the drop in the price of coffee; finally, the return of refugees is hampered by the "scarcity" of land "which characterizes this small, overpopulated country - it is one of the 'historical' arguments of President Habyarimana."³⁹⁴

In fact, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs lists all the reasons that make France's new policy in Rwanda impractical, if not dangerous. However, a whole series of new signals arrived from Kigali in the weeks that followed.

3.5.7.2 A LARGE NUMBER OF WORRYING SIGNALS: NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1993

The end of October was marked by an event that greatly worried President Habyarimana and showed the possibility that France might distance itself from the Rwandan issue: the assassination of the Burundian president.

The crisis that followed the assassination of the Burundian president marked a new stage in the management of Rwandan affairs in Paris. On the one hand, the decision of non-intervention, or little intervention, by France was clearly assumed by the Prime Minister in an interministerial meeting. On the other hand, the parallel with what could happen in Rwanda is not lost on observers. France is clearly aware of the impasse that opens up when the government on which it relies is weak and contested. President Habyarimana was aware of the mortal danger that threatened a head of State who opposed his army, and he saw that France could decide to gauge its support for an African president in difficulty, or worse, to abandon him.

The term of office of the elected president of Burundi, who was sworn in at the beginning of July 1993 and assassinated on 21 October 1993, was one of the shortest in the history of that country.³⁹⁵ His assassination was allegedly carried out by a coup group led by senior Tutsi military officials. The crisis that shook Burundi during the month of October was important because France was indirectly involved. Indeed, part of the Burundian government took refuge in the French embassy and, in the words of Ambassador Henri Crépin-Leblond, "deliberated, consulted but had no control over the country."³⁹⁶ This group called for foreign military intervention, particularly from France, to support the democratization process underway. The decision taken by the French government was to send some twenty soldiers from the group for the protection of public figures.³⁹⁷ But the assassination of President Ndadaye, who was of Hutu origin, was accompanied by massacres: "Reports

from the provinces indicate that Tutsi children were massacred in the center of the country, and the houses of the Tutsi village of Karusi were burned. It seems that the Hutu population in the interior of the country is preparing to resort to violence against the Tutsi."³⁹⁸

The assassination of the President of Burundi personally affected President Habyarimana who was, he would say, on the phone with his counterpart when he was assassinated. He then explicitly asked for help from France, which feared for a moment that the Arusha Accords would not hold up. In fact, French diplomats noted that the international community had not really been moved by the events in Burundi, even in Africa, and President Habyarimana could not be given the help he had hoped for. Bruno Delaye wrote a briefing memo for President Mitterrand.³⁹⁹ Among the reasons considered as possible causes of the coup d'état, in addition to the desire to overthrow the president, there is mention of opposition to an ethnic rebalancing of the army - 80% Tutsi - that the president had undertaken. The Rwandan president, reached by telephone, associates ethnic clashes, the possible end of the Arusha agreements and the need for French military intervention with the coup, all ingredients that show that he sees the coup in Burundi as a general rehearsal for what could happen in his own country:

President Habyarimana contacted us to ask for French military intervention. He points out the risks of ethnic massacres in Burundi and the consequences for Rwanda of this attempted Tutsi coup. According to him, the Arusha Accords would not withstand the overthrow of the Burundian president (Hutu).

The cautious reaction of France cannot fail to worry the Rwandan president. Bruno Delaye notes that at the end of an interministerial meeting held at the Quai d'Orsay that morning, only a press release was issued⁴⁰⁰ and consultations were held with the Belgian authorities, who also issued a press release condemning the coup. The question of a French military intervention was raised but not retained, as the French community (900 people, 800 of whom were in Bujumbura) did not seem to be threatened. François Mitterrand and Hubert Védrine saw the memo on which

the president indicated “no comm[ents].”

On 25 October, Bruno Delaye and General Quesnot took stock again.⁴⁰¹ General Quesnot’s point of view is recognizable in the way he refers to the victims back to back: “The massacres between Tutsi and Hutu are continuing throughout the country and nearly 200,000 people have taken refuge in Rwanda.” The meeting at the Quai d’Orsay showed that the situation is difficult to analyze and, above all, that no democratic power is emerging on which France could possibly base an action. The Burundian authorities did not obtain the French intervention they were asking for.⁴⁰² The French Prime Minister’s representative has taken a firm position in this regard: intervention is only possible to evacuate French nationals. For the rest, the Quai d’Orsay could arrange for an international force to protect the Burundian government.⁴⁰³

François Mitterrand planned to speak about this on Wednesday, 27 October, at the Cabinet Meeting, because the Burundi issue resonated with what could happen in Rwanda, insofar as the conflicts were described as opposing Hutu and Tutsi for control of power, and the rift between the two communities was irreparable. Several memos presented to François Mitterrand took stock in the following days, with General Quesnot and Bruno Delaye making the link with Rwanda: “In any case, the Arusha agreements are in serious danger. Hutu-Tutsi tensions in Rwanda are going to be exacerbated. A race is on between now and the arrival of the Blue Helmets in Kigali (December 1993).”⁴⁰⁴

Throughout the memos, there is mention of massacres and tensions between the communities. For example, in a weekly update on the situation in Africa on 26 October, 1993,⁴⁰⁵ reports of ethnic massacres (in the provinces) were received, while the UNHCR estimated that 250,000 refugees had arrived in Rwanda and Tanzania. Another weekly update on the situation in Africa on 2 November stated: “In Geneva, the UNHCR estimates that more than 600,000 people (10% of the population) have fled the country to Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire.”⁴⁰⁶ On 9 November, another situation brought together all the ingredients for a conflagration: discontent in the army, opposition between Hutu and Tutsi, weakness of the government, and the presence on the ground of a French force with ill-defined missions which, for the moment, was protecting not its nationals but the legitimate government.⁴⁰⁷ But the deterioration of the situation in Burundi had a strong impact at the regional level, first and foremost through the wave of Burundian refugees who left the country in October 1993 to settle in Rwanda in particular. The United Nations Food Aid Program (WFP) was also

concerned, since on 15 February, 1994, it estimated that there were still 236,000 Burundian refugees in Rwanda.⁴⁰⁸ It estimates that one million Burundians have settled outside the country.

The Burundian crisis also has consequences for inter-regional relations. The assassination of President Ndadaye was perceived by President Habyarimana as a sign of notorious defiance towards the Tutsi, as Ambassador Marlaud points out.⁴⁰⁹ Finally, the role of Uganda in the Burundian situation should be examined: President Museveni, questioned at the end of January 1994 during a press conference by Catherine Watson, BBC correspondent in Uganda, about the presence of Burundian putschists in Kampala,

“The Ugandan president replied that he had given orders to arrest and expel the two putschists, but he ruled out the possibility of forced repatriation.”⁴¹⁰ A few weeks later, in mid-1994, the BBC correspondent in Uganda told the press that the Burundian putschists were in Kampala and that they were in a car with UC (the acronym of the presidency) and even in the company of an NRA major. A few weeks later, in mid-March 1994, the French ambassador in Kampala reported “according to a source close to the Ugandan security services, [that] the two putschists were escorted back to the Zairian border at the beginning of the month, which they crossed at Bwera, near Kasese. This information is corroborated by information “gathered from UNOMUR observers.”⁴¹¹

The financial peril

Rwanda’s financial situation has never been brilliant: it is one of the poorest countries in the world. Its only export, coffee, is subject to fluctuations in world prices. The growing burden of military expenditure is straining its borrowing capacity. At least its intensive agriculture can feed its population

as long as it is not destabilized by population displacement. Rwanda's economic and social situation appeared to be in a state of extreme deterioration from the beginning of 1993. Several reports from both the French authorities and international economic and monetary institutions highlighted the risks to the country's stability. All of these sources point to a deterioration in macroeconomic indicators and to the growing weight of constraints in the near future due to the conditionality of aid from international organizations and donors.

The findings of various experts and international observers on the economic and social situation in Rwanda are particularly pessimistic. The impact of the war was underscored by Ambassador Martres in his end-of-mission report in 1993: "In three years, the standard of living has dropped by 20%."⁴¹² On the other hand, the population growth (plus 3.6%) per year is also a burden for Rwanda, which in the absence of economic growth translates into an automatic decline in the per capita standard of living.⁴¹³

One of the other impacts of the war is the number of displaced persons "which is approaching one million."⁴¹⁴ According to a memo from the French Ministry of Economy and Finance, dated 29 January, 1993,⁴¹⁵ spending on the war budget has "now reached an unsustainable level for the state budget." A World Bank mission report in July 1993 notes "Expenditure exceeds revenue by at least 14 billion Rwandan francs (560 MF) and it is unlikely that the Rwandan government will be able to reduce expenditure or increase revenue in the near future."

Faced with the demands of the World Bank in Rwanda, France's position is changing. On 9 April, 1993, the French ambassador in Kigali, while reporting on a meeting with the Rwandan Minister of Planning, stressed that it would be seriously politically inconsistent for France to demand savings on military spending at the very moment when it was trying to create an effective Rwandan army. The World Bank is refusing to refinance Rwanda's "structural adjustment program" as long as military spending

is at 8% instead of the requested 2%. The Rwandan Minister of Planning mentions that the French Prime Minister seemed to have promised him French aid that would not be subject to such conditions during their meeting in October 1992.⁴¹⁶ The ambassador's comment is surprisingly virulent in the way he points out what he sees as the inconsistencies of the French government. If one decides to continue to provide "our indirect military support" in exchange for the continuation of the democratic process, then one must also provide the corresponding financial support without excluding military expenditure.⁴¹⁷

However, on 23 April, 1993, Georges Martres had to point out that:

*the World Bank had decided to suspend the examination of the structural adjustment program and its president had written to the Rwandan head of State recommending that he sign a peace agreement as soon as possible, at the risk of losing the benefit of the support of the Bretton Woods institutions, which automatically implicated "in their wake the bilateral donors, including France, and cutting its budgetary contributions."*⁴¹⁸

French diplomats and international experts point to several political risks on the horizon. First, "the question of paying civil servants will not be long in coming," noted Ambassador Marlaud on 20 July, 1993⁴¹⁹ while emphasizing that the government does not seem to consider this problem with the necessary importance. On the other hand, the consequence of the hiatus between inflation in military spending and low income may, in the long run, limit Rwanda's capacity to import. Rwanda is specifically indebted to France. As of 31 August, the ambassador reported that Rwanda's debt amounted to more than 316 million French francs⁴²⁰ and identified priority debt repayments and reforms.

However, France's position was changing. The cohabitation government was not reluctant to use financial aid as a lever. In July 1993, the new French ambassador in Kigali, Jean-Michel Marlaud, was more specific about the conditions of international aid: "The World Bank will make any action on its part conditional on several prerequisites: the signing of peace agreements, the setting up of a Broad Base Transitional Government, and the latter's establishment of its priorities."⁴²¹

The representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs thus expressed two different positions at two different times. The first was expressed by Georges Martres, who said in April 1993: “In the current state of military inferiority of the Kigali government, it is to give it the choice between stopping international aid or capitulating,” whereas Jean-Marc de La Sablière was more optimistic, or voluntarist, in the document of 20 October cited above.⁴²²

The Élysée is an attentive witness to this shift. The spirit of this new approach is specified in a communication from the Minister for Cooperation to the Cabinet of Ministers in September 1993, commented on for the head of State by his adviser Bruno Delaye.⁴²³ The spirit of La Baule is now interpreted in the sense of encouraging “good governance” and financial aid is explicitly linked to reforms in the spirit of the IMF. However, this new discourse does not go down well with the Francophonie, as Bruno Delaye noted in October.⁴²⁴

The tragic observation of Colonel Cussac, December 1993

In December, the Defense attaché, whose pessimistic analyses have already been noted, considered that the situation in Kigali was hopeless: he could see no way out. In his quarterly report for July, August and September,⁴²⁵ Colonel Cussac notes as new and aggravating elements the resignation of the Minister of Defense, accentuating the hiatus between the FAR hierarchy and the government, the results of the local elections, which sent the RPF the signal that it would never win at the ballot box and that it had to do things differently, and the feeling of bitterness and revenge that reigned among those who risked being dispossessed, especially when the demobilization of an army of 23,000 men took place. The RPF is still considered the destabilizing element in all cases and is seen as the perpetrator of the massacres in Ruhengeri and Gisenyi, targeting the civilian population and more particularly MRND (former single party) candidates.

The report then turns to the displaced Hutu and refugees. It mentions a particularly horrific attack,⁴²⁶ without really asking

about the perpetrators or whether it led to reprisals against the Tutsi. He details what he calls the rise of banditry in which deserting FAR soldiers play a central role. His conclusion reaffirms both the policy that France has been pursuing in Rwanda for the past three years and which has been little changed in 1993: it still consists of supporting President Habyarimana and accusing the RPF of destabilization. Yet the tone of the report is one of deep disenchantment with the political process (note that there is no longer any reference to the government):

The spectators of this buffoonery represent a people who are tired of war and political spin, who aspire for those hundreds of thousands to return to their lands, to eat their fill and to envision, for their children, a less bleak future than they have known. Unfortunately, it seems that these commonsense concerns are far removed from those of current or future politicians for whom the common good should be a notion to be developed.⁴²⁷

Notwithstanding this discrepancy in language, which seems to reflect a profound dismay, Colonel Cussac's report is considered to be "particularly suitable for the needs of the DRM."

What is the significance of the report by the defense attaché in Kigali? Indeed, at the end of 1993, he seems to have exhausted even the patience of his hierarchy with his repeated pessimistic warnings. In the liaison memo, the Directorate of Military Intelligence describes his comments only as "very interesting", but above all as "partially known."⁴²⁸ When they reached the higher levels, Colonel Cussac's analyses were singularly watered down. Thus, General Fresnel, the deputy director of operations, i.e. in charge of producing the DRM's analyses, transformed them quite significantly in a direction more favorable to France's official policy.⁴²⁹ In fact, the December 1993 memo summarizing the report states: "The Arusha Peace Agreement contains both the hopes of an entire people and the seeds of future confrontations because of the importance given to the RPF and the Tutsi ethnic group, which is out of all proportion to the percentage they actually represent. Any slippage in the process could lead to a resumption of confrontations."⁴³⁰ This is not at all what Colonel Cussac said,

who would have been careful not to speak of the hopes of an entire people, and who believes that the path on which France is engaged - forcing the FAR to accept a sharing of command positions that they consider unfair - is in itself dangerous.

The year 1993 marked the beginning of the failure of the French project for Rwanda, not, as had been feared since 1990, as a result of a successful RPF offensive, but as a result of a political process specific to Rwanda that saw the coalition government, which had the possibility of negotiating with the RPF, totally destabilized by Hutu extremists, hostile to any sharing of power, especially in the army.

As we have seen, the pressure of the RPF was contained, but at the cost of an increase in the French military presence, which was never as large or as visible. The possibility of a change in the French role and commitment in Rwanda is nevertheless emerging. New reluctance is emerging within the French government and administration. The report of the International Federation for Human Rights on the torture and execution of Tutsi, the massacres and the fate of political prisoners shook the Minister of Cooperation, Marcel Debarge, in particular. France nevertheless maintained its support for the Rwandan president. The month of April, which saw changes in the political balance in Paris as well as in Kigali, was not, however, the occasion, at first, for a decisive change in French policy but rather for an evolution. In Paris, the cohabitation government of Prime Minister Edouard Balladur did not intend to leave the question of Rwanda solely to the President of the Republic. From the autumn onwards, the decision to disengage militarily in Rwanda was implemented. The condition for the success of this option was the application of the agreements signed in August 1994 in Arusha, concerning the respect of the cease-fire, the presence of observers at the border and the eventual arrival of UN soldiers.

France hoped that UN forces would be able to act effectively to stabilize Rwanda. The arrival of Blue Helmets in Kigali in November and December 1993 owes much to its action. There was intense diplomatic activity, closely followed by the Élysée Palace, in April 1993, in the direction of the United Nations. Jean-Bernard

Mérimée, permanent representative of France to the United Nations, became a key figure in the Rwandan dossier.

The destabilization of the Rwandan government by Hutu extremists from President Habyarimana's entourage, based on attacks, provocations and personal threats, weakened the entire project. The question of the sharing of posts between the FAR and the RPF in the future national army, which was being discussed in Arusha, led to the secession of the Rwandan army cadres, who were increasingly opposed to the legal government. The French in Rwanda are watching this development with concern. Warnings concerning the massacres and the political fracture that led to the splitting of the opposition parties between moderates and extremists went unheeded because they ran counter to the political line chosen at a time when it seemed to be succeeding. In December 1993, the Arusha agreements were signed and France withdrew its troops in good order. Everything seemed to be moving in a favorable direction. This was not the case. On the contrary, political violence intensified in early 1994.

PART TWO

FRANCE AND THE GENOCIDE

Chapter 4

France, the War and the Genocide (April-June 1994)

In all cases of mass violence, the act is certainly preceded by a phase of radicalization and frenetic preparation, but the implementation of a genocide is above all conditioned by the state of war and the installation of a totalitarian regime based on a single party controlling the ministries of power, the paramilitary militias, the administration and the media. The events in Rwanda in the spring of 1994 are no exception to this dismal pattern.

After a study of the radicalization process in Rwanda between 1990 and 1993, this chapter covers the period from 6 April to 15 June, 1994. It has collected political, diplomatic, military, audiovisual, and journalistic archives that document this essential period when France was faced with the realization of the Tutsi genocide. Its ambition is to evaluate how France reacted to the outburst of violence that engulfed Kigali and Rwanda in the aftermath of the attack that cost the life of President Habyarimana. This attack is seen as the act that triggered the genocide of the Tutsi and the elimination of several members of the government and the democratic opposition. Without minimizing the impact of this attack, and in examining here the different hypotheses concerning the perpetrators, consideration has been given above all to the reactions it provoked in France, given that the deceased president was the privileged interlocutor of the French authorities and the keystone of the reconciliation strategy imposed by Paris. Did the death of the Rwandan president call into question the dominant thinking of the Parisian elites? Did France unreservedly adopt the formation of an interim Rwandan

government (IRG), even though it was made up of the most radical members of the MRND, the presidential party?

Among the other questions raised, the setting up of Operation Amaryllis to evacuate French nationals present in Rwanda requires special attention: launched the day after the discovery of the murder of two French gendarmes, it brought the French military into direct contact with the atrocity of the mass murders that were taking place before their eyes. More generally, this chapter examines the epistolary exchanges between Kigali and Paris to identify the broad outlines of the French position on whether or not to maintain a military presence in Rwanda after the closure of the French embassy. It also examines the reasons that led Paris to ensure the evacuation of President Habyarimana's relatives. Finally, it analyzes the perception, in the spheres of power, of the genocide that has begun. In other words, we have tried to translate the deafening silence, the euphemistic interpretations observed in the dispatches that go back to Paris concerning the mass murders. The evolution of the military situation seems to have preoccupied the French more than the massacres attributed to recurrent local practices. The departure of the last French soldiers on 14 April dried up the sources of information on the genocide, including those emanating from the DRM or the DGSE, although French-speaking journalists nevertheless carried out remarkable investigative work that was followed at the highest levels. It should therefore be noted that the genocide itself of the Tutsi is hardly documented by official French sources.

The universal dimension of the extermination of the Tutsi provoked a reaction from international bodies, which will then be examined in light of the French diplomatic sources. This provides an opportunity to clarify the positions adopted by France within the UN Security Council. This concerns the question of the maintenance or disengagement of UNAMIR, and more specifically the question of the inaction, sometimes close to indifference, that characterizes the members of the Security Council. A section is devoted to the evolution, which is not without interest, of the French position on the international scene during the spring of 1994. The last point in this chapter is a transition to the next and attempts to explain the genesis of Operation Turquoise.

4.1 FRANCE FACED WITH THE RADICALIZATION OF THE CIRCLES OF POWER

The act of mass violence is preceded by phases of radicalization that result in a discourse aimed at increasingly stigmatizing a group identified as the “enemy within.” This phenomenon can be more or less rapid, but is often characterized by the emergence of an active minority that poses as a credible interlocutor of the government in power, with which it is more or less associated. In the case of Rwanda in 1990-1994, a radicalization was perceptible from the beginning of the 1990s within the single party MRND, officially embodied by the head of State, President Habyarimana. However, it remained a minority within the dominant party, preventing any action. Many observers have noted that President Habyarimana has long maintained a balance within his party between the extremists and the less radical. Without rejecting any option, he sought above all to preserve his prerogatives, making only minimal concessions to others. The introduction of a multiparty system, which gave rise to a liberal opposition, and the beginning of dialogue with the Tutsi opposition have certainly reduced his personal power, but they have also enabled him to give an image of openness likely to enhance his international credibility. In so doing, he has undoubtedly helped to conceal part of the program to eliminate the Tutsi of Rwanda carried out by a fringe of the MRND. The process of radicalization is all the more important because it constitutes the stage prior to the implementation of a genocide, that of the maturation of a project by the most extremist.

In order to meet the requirements of this report, it is therefore essential to examine the level of knowledge available to the French authorities and the way they responded to the alerts sent by the defense attachés, members of the DRM and diplomats present in Kigali.

4.1.1 Identification of the Northern Clan

The collection of information from the field by the defense attaché at the Kigali embassy constitutes a first level of examination

likely to show the quality of the intelligence being communicated to Paris. Colonel René Galinié, who remained in his post for three years, until July 1991, identified very early on the evolution of President Habyarimana's regime. His annual report to the Chief of Staff, sent on 15 January, 1990,¹ noted first of all that the president was increasingly inclined to be controlled by his wife's clan, the same clan that would become the most radical core in April 1994. This Northern Clan, from which most of the FAR officers and political cadres are recruited, has controlled both the state and the economy of the country since it took power in 1973. The offensive carried out from Uganda by RPF forces in early October 1990 shook up the circles of power in Kigali and at the same time encouraged the Rwandan opposition to emerge. In addition to these initial confrontations between the RPF and the FAR, the wear and tear on power, the economic and political crisis, called into question the control of the Northern Clan and consequently provoked a radicalization of its members. The DRM repeatedly transmitted analyses that confirm the awareness of this in Paris.²

The creation of a secret organization that structures the most radical fringe of the Northern Clan, on the other hand, seems to have escaped the French authorities. In 1991, a hard core of the Northern Clan organized itself to form the "Akazu"³ or "Zero Network." It was not until September 1994 that the DGSE described its existence and functioning, based on the revelations made in 1993 by the Kigali prosecutor, Alphonse Nkubito, to the commission of inquiry of the International Federation of Human Rights. The Zero Network is "made up of Hutu radicals from the north, civilians and soldiers, close to the presidential family and opposed to any democratic development in Rwanda."⁴ Its members aim to sabotage the democratization process and to this end organize political assassinations and massacres by means of "death squads" intended to reinforce ethnic hatred. This Zero Network, whose "real brains" seem to be, according to the DGSE, Agathe Habyarimana and her brother Protée Zigiranyirazo, known as "Mr. Z,"

was set up in 1991, during a meeting attended by officers and members of the board of the National Republican Movement for

Democracy (MRND). When asked about the consequences of democratization, the participants concluded that if President Habyarimana agreed to share power, it would go to the Hutu in the south.⁵

At the time, the defense attaché in Kigali saw some signs of the creation of the Akazu. In a June 1991 message, he indicated that while some ministers with a reputation for liberality had been appointed, they were nonetheless “controlled in their actions and decisions by the small group of leaders, including a few high-ranking military officers, who form the first circle around the president and who effectively have the powers.” The members of this first circle “paralyze the action of the head of State and undermine his possible desire for in-depth transformation. Among them are his wife, Colonel Sagatwa (head of his private secretariat, a veritable watchdog of the presidency), Minister Tsirorera (Industry and Handicrafts), Colonel Serubuga and Colonel Rwagafilita (respectively deputy chiefs of staff of the army and the gendarmerie), and Colonel Nsekalide (retired).”⁶ These members of the regime’s hard core are, the defense attaché adds, the

objective holders of all powers since the social revolution of 1973. They consider it to be their exclusive property... Their hostility to any democratic evolution has not prevented them from understanding that to oppose it indiscriminately would be suicidal. For the past six months, they have been declaring that it is irreversible and will be beneficial, but at the same time they have been creating a maximum of obstacles to its realization by: the ill-considered reinforcement of the numbers and means of the armed forces in order to control a loyal clientele... the maintenance of the fear aroused by the aggressor by regularly announcing, urbi et orbi, the imminent and massive attack of the NRA or the infiltration of commandos in cities, etc.; the sabotage of the emergence of independent parties in the making, through all sorts of pressures and interventions and, on the contrary, the promotion of the new MRND.⁷

This report identifies precisely the potential enemies of the clan controlling the MRND, those whom it aims to neutralize first, not without the active complicity of the president himself:

These actions of the chief magistrate allow some observers to declare either his ambiguous and even complicit attitude or his destroyed capacity for reflection or his lost authority. The influence of this first circle is not, moreover, due solely to its power and propensity to exploit fear and

*manipulate the truth. It is, in all likelihood, also based on "its knowledge of the secrets of the Second Republic" (collective massacres, individual physical eliminations, embezzlement, various types of prevarication...), which are embarrassing for its members but also for many authorities.*⁸

The defense attaché thus highlights an essential element, namely the pact that binds the members of the clan and prompts them to defend by all means the monopoly they have. The dominant state of mind of the Northern Clan was therefore not unknown to the French authorities, who apparently did not perceive, or did not want to see, the threat posed by the ruling party, contenting themselves with observing the "ambiguous" attitude of the Rwandan president, who was still the head of the MRND. Faced with this identified clan system, surviving only thanks to the military support of Paris, both the Hutu opposition and the RPF cadres could legitimately attribute a form of complicity to France in the survival of the clan in power. By benefiting from the French military presence, the regime seemed convinced that it could maintain its privileges for a long time to come.⁹ Radicalization accelerated when the deceptions exploited until then to maintain the *status quo* were no longer sufficient. When a political process cannot be completed, it delays the consolidation of democratic structures, paving the way for radical action.

The RPF's first offensive on Rwanda's northern border in October 1990 led to persecution of the Tutsi in the interior. The French defense attaché noted for the first time that "many suspects were arrested, imprisoned, interrogated, and sometimes shot. The population, fearing a lack of food, now willingly denounces them. This hunt could, if it worsens, degenerate into a massacre."¹⁰ A few days later, he states that "Hutu peasants organized by the MRND have intensified the search for suspected Tutsi in the hills; massacres have been reported in the Kibilira region, 20 km northwest of Gitarama. The risk of generalization of this confrontation, which has already been reported, thus seems to have become a reality."¹¹ After emphasizing the central role of the single party in the organization of this violence, the defense attaché explains what would happen if the RPF came to power:

Anything that might appear to be a territorial abandonment in this region

*would certainly trigger serious abuses against the Tutsi populations in the interior, which would either be spontaneous or directly encouraged by the hardliners of the current regime, thus risking everything (the inner circle that “we support” [handwritten addition]).*¹²

In a personal message to Colonel Huchon, deputy chief of staff, Colonel Galinié described the situation in Kigali:

*It emerges that everyone thinks it is necessary first of all to remove from power the corrupt ministers and entourage of the head of State, but no one names names. According to the post, these are mainly the president’s brothers-in-law, ministers such as Nzirorera (Industry and Handicrafts), Ntagerura (Public Works), and the two deputy chiefs of staff, Colonel Serubuga (Rwandan army) and Colonel Rwagafilita (national gendarmerie).*¹³

After mentioning the search for people “known for their competence, independence and probity,” the defense attaché, Galinié, added that Ambassador Martres had been asked by Colonel Sagatwa, the president’s private secretary, to provide names.¹⁴ This detail is not without interest, since it shows that one of the most eminent members of the Northern Clan, Colonel Sagatwa, who was himself implicated, asked the French diplomat for names.

Finally, in another message, the defense attaché mentions the problem posed by the concessions requested by the RPF from the Rwandan authorities in order to reach an agreement and gives a clear point of view on the red lines that should not be crossed and the inevitable violent reactions of the Rwandan authorities:

*In particular, they cannot accept the imposition of a territorial surrender on the grounds of establishing a cease-fire for the benefit of Tutsi invaders who wish to regain the power lost in 1959... This avowed or disguised re-establishment would in all likelihood lead to the physical elimination of 500,000 to 700,000 Tutsi in the interior of the country, by the Hutu, 7,000,000 individuals.*¹⁵

Incitement to hatred against the Tutsi flourished at the end of 1990, and any attempt at compromise was viewed with suspicion by the most radical fringe of President Habyarimana’s camp, to which he offered little resistance. Ambassador Martres was well aware of the Rwandan president’s double-dealing. At the end

of November 1990, he reported that “the speech made on 13 November by President Habyarimana was largely for the use of foreigners, particularly the Western powers who were pushing for the democratization of the regime.” Indeed, “the decisions announced in this speech were toned down, even transformed, in their presentation in Kinyarwanda to the population. But this double talk reflects the difficulty the Rwandan president has in getting the Hutu majority, especially in the regions of Ruhengeri and Gisenyi, to accept certain reforms.”¹⁶

To attack the opposition and stir up hatred against the Tutsi, Hutu extremists created the magazine *Kangura* in May 1990. In December 1990, it published “The Ten Commandments of Muhutu”, an openly racist text that Ambassador Martres reported to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Roland Dumas. This decalogue calls on the Hutus in particular to “know that every Tutsi woman always works, wherever she is, for the benefit of her ethnic group,” “to marry only Hutu women,” to have “no pity” for the Tutsi, and “to consider as traitors the Hutu who opposes this ideology.”¹⁷ The French ambassador in Kigali weakly denounces the “excessive character [of these] ‘ten commandments’, none of which leaves room for dialogue with the opposing clan, in any field whatsoever.”¹⁸ Are the French authorities completely impervious to the racist propaganda of Hutu extremists? The use by the defense attaché of the racist nickname “inyenzi” (cockroach) to describe the exiled Tutsi raises doubts.¹⁹ Above all, Ambassador Martres’ mention, in March 1991, of Europeans who had “married Tutsi women and created a pro-Tutsi lobby” does not show much critical sense with regard to *Kangura’s* elucidations.²⁰

Ambassador Martres observed in January 1991 that *Kangura* “finds its best support in the Rwandan army, which is dominated by Hutus from the North,” and that the attacks perpetrated by this magazine “are part of the pressure exerted by Hutu extremists on President Habyarimana in order to get him to harden his positions.” “While one should not underestimate the power of the Hutu racist movement within the structures of power and particularly in the army,” the ambassador added, “it should be noted that efforts are being made at the highest level to contain it.”²¹ These efforts seem relative, however. In February 1991, the defense attaché, Colonel Galinié, observed, under cover of the ambassador,

that Habyarimana affirms his desire for democracy, but reshuffles his government by dismissing all the ministers implicated in the *Kangura* magazine.²²

In this context, it is hardly surprising that the draft “National Charter,” which was supposed to contribute to a thorough reform of the political system by bringing in new elites, did not satisfy the opposition. For them the Charter gives the upper hand to the MRND: “For some, these provisions constitute a concession to the ‘hardliners’ of the presidential entourage who fear universal suffrage and could thus preserve at least part of their advantages because of their real influence on the CDR and the MRND.”²³

4.1.2 March 1992: a turning point in the radicalization of the Northern Clan

The pressure from the Rwandan opposition following the deterioration of the domestic political situation and the firm encouragement to engage in dialogue with this opposition sent by France to the Habyarimana regime in the spring of 1992 constituted a turning point in the rise in power of the most radical members of the Northern Clan. This was reflected in the appearance of militias created by the MRND and the CDR, which were only accountable to the party to which they were affiliated.²⁴ The new defense attaché in Kigali, Colonel Cussac, informed Paris of the arming of these militias, which did not fail to worry him,²⁵ and of a project to arm the civilian populations of the Ruhengeri and Byumba areas: “The people constituted as self-defense militias to whom these weapons will be distributed will be chosen on the basis of their ‘repute’ and will be ‘advised’ by FAR personnel.”²⁶ He also drew the attention of his Parisian hierarchy to the fact that it was the local notables “who would designate the bearers of arms and who all came from the administration set up by the MRND.”²⁷ In other words, in addition to its considerable influence within the FAR, the MRND structured its armed networks among civilians under the circumspect eye of the French.

At the same time, Colonel Rosier, commander of the 1st RPIMA, informed the general staff of the formation in March 1992 of a new political party, the CDR (Coalition for the Defense of the Republic) in

Rwanda: “Its president is Martin Bucyana. It seems to be the hardline branch of the MRND. It is a party of the Hutu majority and its main claim is to defend the popular majority; it fights the Tutsi and their ideas. It is hostile to the formation of the new government and is particularly opposed to the allocation of certain portfolios to the opposition.”²⁸

Among the other signs of the rise in power of the Hutu radicals, the creation of the Presidential Guard should be highlighted. It is already arousing suspicion, with France being accused from the outset by the opposition of training these “death squads.”²⁹

The massacres of Tutsi committed in Bugesera,³⁰ as well as the growing insecurity marked by explosions and attacks “committed by bandits often dressed in military uniforms” are certainly a concrete translation of the destabilization strategy carried out by the Hutu radicals. In September 1994, the analysis services of the DGSE explained that:

In the years leading up to the attack on President Habyarimana, the operations generally carried out by the “death squads,” the real armed wing of the “Zero Network,” aimed to destabilize the main opposition parties, to provoke disorder, and even bloody confrontations, with the main goal of sabotaging the democratization process and the application of the Arusha Accords. In addition to the organized disruption of numerous political meetings of the opposition, the “Zero Network” is strongly suspected of having encouraged, on several occasions, the development of inter-ethnic hatreds, with the sole aim of suspending any political development likely to take some of the power out of the hands of the Hutu from the north.³¹

In this context, the office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs adopts the analysis of the French ambassador in Kigali to observe the existence of an amalgam that is made between the aid provided by France to the Presidential Guard, “the security services and mysterious ‘death squads’ that pass for maintaining terror in the country. It is true that the government has so far made little effort to distinguish between attacks attributable to the rebellion, those linked to internal political rivalries, and those that are simply banditry.”³²

In order to have a complete picture of the activism of the Hutu extremists, it should finally be noted that in April 1992, France took the decision to reinforce

its support to the Rwandan authorities, accepting in particular the appointment of a senior French officer as advisor to the FAR chief of staff.³³ While this decision was debated within the military staff and elsewhere, it was accompanied by a clear desire to impose reforms on the Habyarimana regime that would broaden the political base of the Rwandan government. The trip to Rwanda from 8 to 12 May 1992, by General Jean Varret, head of the Military Cooperation Mission, seems to have laid the groundwork for the conditions submitted by Paris for long-term support. In particular, he met three times with the new MDR Prime Minister of the first transitional government, with whom a reform program was developed.³⁴ Dismas Nsengiyaremye said he was ready to discuss with the RPF without making the return of the occupied territories a prerequisite.³⁵ The new Prime Minister, from the liberal opposition, and the Ministry of Defense demanded a “complete reorganization of the FAR staff,” removing from their responsibilities Colonel Serubuga (FAR staff), Colonel Rwagafilita (gendarmerie) and Colonel Sagatwa (head of the president’s private secretariat). General Jean Varret notes in this respect that “it is unlikely that the President will easily accept the retirement of these three faithful representatives of the intransigent tendency of his army,”³⁶ in other words, of three major elements of the Northern Clan, unavoidable pillars of the MRND.

Far from being a misplaced demand, the resumption of control of the FAR by officers who were a little more concerned with public order had become an urgent matter because of the increase in anti-Tutsi violence. In March 1992, a DRM officer drew an eloquent picture of the pogroms committed against the Tutsi population: on 6, 7 and 8 March Hutu peasants massacred Tutsi in Kanzenze and throughout the Kanazi sub-prefecture, without the forces of law and order or the army stopping these abuses. An official report put the number of victims at around sixty, a figure that was probably understated. On 10 March, “the massacres of the Tutsi population and the burning of their homes continued.”³⁷ The DRM writer notes that the repeated assassination of Hutu civilians on the Rwandan-Ugandan border, attributed to the RPF, as well as the massacre of around 1,500 Burundian Hutu by Burundian soldiers at the end of November 1991, created a climate conducive to the unleashing of

violence. The Tutsi are regularly accused of conspiring with the enemy, the RPF, and of preparing for aggression against their Hutu neighbors: “On 3 March, the official Rwandan radio station broadcast an announcement about the risk of assassination of Hutu personalities by RPF sponsors. This announcement heated up the Hutu spirits in Bugesera and set off a fire.”³⁸ The military intelligence officer observed above all that:

*If the government authorities seem embarrassed by the role of the national radio, the broadcasting of the announcement can only have been authorized by one of them. These events come at a time when the Rwandan president was about to form a coalition government, the formation of which may be delayed. The unwillingness of the Rwandan army, which is almost entirely Hutu (sic), to re-establish order and chase down the uncontrolled gangs shows that the antagonism runs deep.*³⁹

It is difficult not to see in the implementation of this violence the political and military networks that work to stigmatize the Tutsi populations systematically assimilated to the RPF. The well-known construction of the image of the “enemy within” in mass violence is at work. The radicals thus worked to make it impossible to share power by forming a coalition government.

The opening of negotiations between the Rwandan authorities and RPF leaders in Arusha in July 1992 only strengthened the resolve of the radicals, who saw this initiative as an act of weakness on the part of President Habyarimana. The repeated failures of the FAR to ensure Rwanda’s territorial integrity without the intervention of French forces made the Arusha accords unavoidable. During the autumn, despite the July cease-fire and the first political exchanges, the Director of African Affairs, Jean-Marc de La Sablière, did not hide his concerns: “The situation in Rwanda remains marked by ethnic tensions exacerbated by the August clashes and the threat posed by the Hutu extremists (CDR), who are hostile to concessions that could undermine the powers of the president.”⁴⁰ In a report sent to Paris a few days later, the defense attaché in Kigali, Colonel Bernard Cussac, observed that “the internal situation could have been considerably calmed if the militias of the political parties had not intensified their action at the same pace as the negotiations with the RPF were progressing, and if the skirmishes

between young MRNDs, young RPFs or PLs or PSDs had not resulted in several deaths per week.”⁴¹ It is clear that the attempts at conciliation made in Arusha provoked an outburst of violence orchestrated by the party in power. It should also be noted that this reaction also had its effect within the FAR, as Colonel Cussac notes: “This analysis of the situation is supported by current events in which units of the Rwandan army (para-commando battalion, Presidential Guard, Kanombe camp, Ruhengeri battalion) are on the verge of revolt to protest against the reinstatement of officers who had been dismissed in ’90, ’91 or ’92 for collusion with the enemy or abandoning their posts.”⁴² This comment highlights one of the red lines that the senior officers of the Northern Clan drew, namely to refuse the reintegration into the FAR of soldiers who might show sympathy for the opposition or, in their eyes, challenge their domination of the Rwandan military.

This hardening within the FAR was already perceptible during the previous weeks. A section of French soldiers from Operation *Noroît*, on a repatriation mission, confirmed that the Rwandan army had engaged in abuses targeting Tutsi in Byumba, in the north of the country. The same source insists that “the danger to the safety of expatriates came not so much from the external rebellion as from an increasingly demoralized Rwandan army, some elements of which are expressing their bitterness at feeling betrayed by the ongoing negotiations process through banditry.”⁴³ The change at the head of the FAR staff, with the replacement of Colonels Serubuga and Rwagafilita,⁴⁴ did not bring about a profound change in the practices of the Rwandan army. During the Arusha negotiations, French observers noted that tensions persisted and that the most extremist parties found a favorable echo within the population: “Parties like the CDR took advantage of the situation to increase their influence, some even going so far as to denounce the multiparty system, calling for the return of the single party against a backdrop of anti-Tutsi diatribes... Yesterday, the MRND youth organizations created street incidents in several towns by stopping traffic.”⁴⁵

The entry into force of the cease-fire at the beginning of August 1992 did not reduce tensions. On the other hand, the sympathy

shown by the leaders of the Liberal Party towards the RPF's political proposals was exploited by the Hutu extremists to justify their absolute refusal to implement the Arusha Accords. Dismissed from the leadership of the army, the members of the Northern Clan organized the revolt: "The militants of the CDR, Coalition for the Defense of the Republic, and the youth of the Republican Movement for Development and Democracy (MRND) are increasingly violent in their attacks on the government, which is accused of treason, and on the Tutsi." The French writer concludes, not without reason: "These radicals who are hostile to the rebellion could be tempted to reunite the Hutus by provoking ethnic incidents leading to a hunt for Tutsi. The consequence would be a questioning of the Arusha agreements and a resumption of fighting that could lead to a generalized civil war."⁴⁶ Léon Mugesera, a member of the MRND political bureau, openly advocated the liquidation of the Tutsi, while the "death squads" were at work.⁴⁷

4.1.3 Events that fueled the radicalization of the MRND and the CDR: Arusha and Burundi

It should first be emphasized that several clauses of the Arusha Accords, negotiated on several occasions from 10 to 31 July, 1992, then from 30 October, 1992 to 9 January, 1993, and finally in July-August 1993, constitute a central element in the process of radicalization of Hutu power circles. The reports sent to Paris by the first secretary of the French embassy in Dar-es-Salam, Jean-Christophe Belliard - a recognized specialist in Africa who was present during the talks - highlight the extreme tensions that were openly manifested within the Rwandan delegation. Generally composed of the Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs, at least one member of the presidential cabinet, and representatives of the MRND and certain opposition parties, the delegation publicly expressed antagonistic positions in the face of the RPF delegates' perfectly harmonized demands.

Among the clauses of the agreement, the one relating to the composition of the future Rwandan army, in which 40% of the total number of personnel and 50% of the officer positions were to be given to Tutsi,⁴⁸ was a red line in the eyes of the MRND presidential party. The appointment of

the MDR president, Faustin Twagiramungu, as the future prime minister of a government of national accord also meant that the presidential party would be removed from the levers of power. In the same vein, the RPF delegation demanded that the hardest branch of the Hutu radicals, the CDR, whose militias had actively participated in the anti-Tutsi pogroms in the months preceding the negotiations, be excluded from all official bodies, and in particular from the Transitional National Assembly (TNA). All of these issues were well understood by the French delegates, whose analyses were regularly sent back to Paris.⁴⁹

The other major issue in the rise of the Hutu extremists was the changing political situation in neighboring Burundi. The election of Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu, as President of the Republic on 1 June, 1993, against the outgoing President Buyoya, a Tutsi, was perceived as an encouraging element by the circles of power in Kigali, starting with President Habyarimana. But the assassination of the Burundian president on 21 October, 1993, following a coup d'état fomented by the Tutsi-controlled army, broke the capital of confidence painstakingly built up during the Arusha negotiations, according to French observers. President Habyarimana was, Ambassador Marlaud reports, in telephone contact with his Burundian counterpart until the latter was discovered in his hideout by the mutineers and executed. This personal experience undoubtedly contributed to the Rwandan president's doubts about the possibility of implementing the Arusha Accords and fueled the "justificationism"⁵⁰ developed by the Hutu extremists in his entourage. It can be seen that it was immediately after this murder, in October 1993, that RTLM (Radio-Télévision des Mille Collines), which began broadcasting in July 1993, began to develop an unambiguous anti-Tutsi vengeful discourse on its airwaves, following the intentions of its extremist founders.

One of the keys to ending the crisis, President Habyarimana, was then the arbitrator able to settle the disputes: "The head of State, President Habyarimana," writes Major Bière of the DRM, "was led to commit himself to the path of democracy. He has accepted to associate the opposition with the government. He has yet to resolve to reduce

his prerogatives and to impose on the Hutu radicals the representation of Tutsi within the various governmental bodies.”⁵¹ The judgment made by these French officers perfectly summarizes the dilemma faced by the Rwandan head of State, as well as that of the elites of the North, who measured the risks of this democratic evolution challenging their privileges.

In addition, the resistance of President Habyarimana - and the radical clans surrounding him - to the implementation of the Arusha Accords was partly responsible for the new offensive launched by the RPA⁵² in February 1993. The recurrent massacres perpetrated by the Hutu extremists also played a certain role, as an analysis by the DGSE would later explain:

*The abuses perpetrated in January 1993 in the east of the country by the armed Hutu militias of the National Republican Movement for Democracy (MRND) and the Coalition for the Defense of the Republic (CDR), with the complicity of certain local authorities, were largely responsible for the resumption of fighting by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in February 1993.*⁵³

In February 1993, the DRM reported, however, that the “reciprocal abuses committed between the RPF and the MRND-CDR since mid-January were the work of both sides,” but stressed the lack of tangible evidence to attribute responsibility for these acts. The writer nevertheless notes that the demonstration organized by the extremist parties on 20 December, 1992 “to oppose the content of the Arusha negotiations opened a period of internal unrest that lasted in most of the country until the RPF attack on February 8.”⁵⁴ He also points out that the prefectures of Gitarama and Butare, strongholds of the MDR and PSD, opposition parties, “were spared, while the prefectures of Ruhengeri and Gisenyi (MRND and CDR strongholds) were the most affected by the unrest,” where a “hunt for Tutsi” was organized as early as mid-January.⁵⁵ The toll of this violence, 129 dead and 2,020 refugees, “90% of whose victims were Tutsi or Hutu married to Tutsi or Hutus from the south,” shows not reciprocal abuses, as the subject of this dispatch indicates, but one-way crimes; with the complicity of the FAR, to say the least, the gendarmerie nonetheless distinguished itself by intervening on several occasions to restore calm.⁵⁶

Regarding the armed intervention of the RPF following this anti-Tutsi violence, the same source reports rumors of 500 civilian deaths on 17 February, 1993 in a camp for displaced persons in northwestern Rwanda, and “massacres perpetrated by the RPF in the areas it controls, notably in the prefecture of Ruhengeri, and abductions of civilians in the various camps for displaced persons.”⁵⁷ The rumors of RPF abuses in question emanate in fact from a “Liaison Committee of Rwandan associations for the defense of human rights of unknown political origin,” linked to “local authorities, therefore close to the MRND” in the prefecture of Ruhengeri.⁵⁸ A critical reading of these sources tends to show that the accusations of “abuses” attributed to the RPF are to be attributed to the local networks of the MRND, which thus continued its work of undermining the democratization process and its strategy of stigmatizing Rwandan Tutsi systematically assimilated to the RPF.

Another DRM report, following the RPF offensive, mentions one death and several destroyed houses in Mbogo, in the Rulindo sector, “shootings of civilians” and the “physical elimination of members of Hutu nationalist parties and some magistrates,” attributed to the RPF, but also repeated looting by the FAR in Ruhengeri, from mid-February to mid-March 1993.”⁵⁹

This latent war, represented as a Hutu-Tutsi confrontation, was very probably exploited, particularly by the most radical members of the MRND, to widen their audience within the party. Moreover, the party found “a favorable echo in the ethnic group that it represents.”⁶⁰ The calm observed after the February clashes was generally respected during the negotiations of the Arusha Accords, even leading, according to French observers, to a demobilization of the FAR, some sections of which routinely engaged in “armed banditry.”⁶¹ These negotiations (10-12 July), which provided for a cease-fire on 31 July, undeniably marked the rise of the RPF, which posed a direct threat to Habyarimana’s regime. In Kigali, the defense attaché, Colonel Cussac, noted that “the Rwandan negotiators themselves seemed frightened by the commitments they had signed, particularly concerning the departure of foreign troops after the effective establishment of the neutral military observer group.” In

particular, he emphasized the strong tensions generated by the RPF's demand for parity in the composition of the future Rwandan army, which would be 50% Tutsi.⁶²

The programmed departure of the French contingents from Operation *Noroît*, a sort of guarantee against the political ambitions of the RPF, remains nevertheless the major concession of Juvénal Habyarimana and probably marks the beginning of a rupture between the head of the MRND, i.e., the President of the Republic, and the Northern Clan, which includes his wife, his brothers-in-law, and the main FAR cadres. Their strategy, however, was to attack directly not the President, but the opposition Prime Minister and his allies, "accused of having improperly appropriated power, in particular Mrs. Agathe Uwilingiyimana and Faustin Twagiramungu."⁶³

A report from the French Ministry of Defense states that "extremist elements" of both protagonists do not want to see the Arusha Accords implemented. It is aimed in particular at Paul Kagame for the RPF, and at the Chief of Staff and several of his officers for the FAR. The same document worries about the risk of things getting out of hand after the establishment of the UN international force (UNAMIR) and the scheduled departure of the *Noroît* detachment; especially since "Hutu extremism could take advantage of the dissatisfaction of those left behind by the period of democratic transition (dismissed civil servants, demobilized soldiers, the wounded, refugees) to radicalize its action and perpetrate attacks or provocations against the RPF."⁶⁴

These concerns proved to be well-founded, as the Defense Attaché informed Paris of massacres that occurred in the Ruhengeri region on the night of 17-18 November, 1993: all the villages targeted were attacked at the same time, around 11:00 p.m., by individuals in military uniform. The author puts forward various hypotheses as to who was responsible for these massacres, without being able to decide.⁶⁵ The investigation carried out by the Rwandan authorities and a UNAMIR commission reported 65 dead and around a hundred wounded, crimes for which both parties accuse each other.⁶⁶ A few days later, on 29 November, the RPF launched a reprisal operation in the Kabatwa region, killing 18 people.⁶⁷

4.1.4 The extremists' opposition to the Arusha Accords at all costs

This transitional period, during which the contingents of Operation *Noroît* were withdrawn and replaced by UNAMIR elements, was supposed to allow for the installation of a transitional government in Kigali before 1 January 1994. It was also planned to install an RPF battalion in the capital, which was to be stationed on the premises of the CND (National Council of Development),⁶⁸ in anticipation of its inclusion in the FAR. However, the defense attaché sent dispatch after dispatch highlighting the difficulties observed in setting up the interim government: the tensions between the RPF battalion in Kigali and the Hutu population, as well as the concerns of the Tutsi population, who were looking for guarantees to live in security in the country. He noted that the RPF battalion had grown from 600 to 800 men in one month, “in violation of the Arusha accords.”⁶⁹

Multiple localized “incidents” reveal the mistrust of all the parties involved in the conflict, such as the tensions generated by the return of refugees from Uganda to whom the RPF wishes to distribute land. Needless to say, demographic pressure weighs heavily in a country where land ownership is a matter of survival.⁷⁰ In terms of negotiations, a few examples show how unrealistic the implementation of the Arusha agreements was: a meeting of the joint FAR/RPF commission was held on 15 January 1994, in Ngondore, to determine the proposed rank insignia for the future national army, but there was no mention of the distribution of military regions;⁷¹ the first Tutsi contingent, the RPF battalion of the CND, which was supposed to be integrated into the future army, opened fire with 12.7 machine guns on 8 January against a Belgian C-130 which flew over the town and the CND at low altitude;⁷² the CND was transformed into an entrenched camp and “became a real fortress.”⁷³

Referring to the position of RPF leader General Paul Kagame, who is not seeking any position in the new administration, Colonel Cussac is convinced that “it is probably and above all because he was convinced that the Arusha Accords had no chance of becoming a reality.”⁷⁴ It is also clear that President Habyarimana himself

hesitated to give the green light to the establishment of the interim government, no doubt under pressure from the radicals of the Northern Clan. On 5 January, 1994, he did take the oath of office, “prior to the establishment of the broad-based government,” but blocked the installation of the designated prime minister: by doing so, he “endangered the entire transition process. Rumors of a coup d’état were circulating yesterday, with responsibility sometimes attributed to the RPF, sometimes to the FAR themselves, and this despite the presence, as discreet as ever, of UNAMIR in the capital.”⁷⁵

For the French officials present in Rwanda, it is mistrust that dominates in Kigali as in the provinces. Two incidents on the front line are revealing: in Muvumba, the RPF opened fire on members of the FAR; 4 km south-west of Byumba, a section of the FAR came under fire from units of the RPF;⁷⁶ three FAR soldiers moving near the front line were killed by members of the RPF.⁷⁷ The investigation shows that on 11 February, these three soldiers were on their way to a snack bar and were ambushed: one of them was shot and the other two were killed with knives, and no legitimate defense could be claimed.⁷⁸

With regard to the president’s party, the defense attaché is convinced that:

*the code of good conduct presented by the MRND will henceforth constitute an unavoidable step prior to the establishment of institutions. As the post has been pointing out for some time, this “code of good conduct” is in fact nothing more than an expression of President Habyarimana’s fear of being put on trial as soon as the new government and National Assembly are in place. This is why this code includes, among other things, a proposal for a general amnesty.*⁷⁹

While this sentence is accurate, it leaves out the essential point, namely that the president is above all aware of the risks he runs from his wife’s clan. On 22 February, more than six weeks after the deadline, Colonel Cussac announced that in principle the government should be formed the same day, “including RPF ministers. However, the future Prime Minister, Mr. Twagiramungu, is increasingly isolated and even contested by supporters of his own party, the Hutu MDR.” He “will undoubtedly have difficulty forming his government if he does not make concessions to his Hutu nationalist opponents.”⁸⁰ This euphemistic

remark was quickly confirmed by the announcement of the assassination of Mr. Gatabazi, the Minister of Public Works and Energy, by assailants equipped with Kalashnikov rifles: "There is no doubt," wrote Colonel Cussac, "that this act will further delay the setting up of the transitional institutions." The day before, in the afternoon and evening of 21 February, 1994, the CDR demonstrated in front of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, holding its employees hostage. The extremist party demanded to sign the code of ethics for political parties in order to participate in the transitional National Assembly. It is specified on this occasion that the CDR had until then refused any participation in the transition.⁸¹ The end of the same dispatch reports the assassination of Martin Bucyana, national president of the CDR, in Mbazi, 5 km north of Butare.⁸²

This double murder, one targeting the minister and executive secretary of the PSD, Félicien Gatabazi, and the other the national president of the Coalition for the Defense of the Republic (CDR), Bucyana, who was lynched to death near Butare to avenge Gatabazi, says a lot about the increasingly violent behavior of the parties involved; and in particular the means used by the MRND/CDR, then in the hands of the most extremist, to block the establishment of the parliament and the transitional government, which was obviously postponed indefinitely after these political assassinations. The reformist PSD party was expected to "hold three ministerial portfolios and eleven seats in parliament; instead, the CDR, because of its extremist positions, was excluded from the transitional government."⁸³

A curfew was introduced in Kigali following the assassination of the two politicians, but this could not prevent the violence that occurred the following night in the working-class districts of the capital. According to the first estimates of the defense attaché, several dozen people died in these clashes, the majority of them Tutsi.⁸⁴ He tells us that they finally caused the death of 300 Tutsi in Kigali during the previous days and on the night of 25 to 26 February, as well as 200 wounded.⁸⁵ It is difficult not to see behind these crimes the hand of the Hutu radicals who seemed determined to prevent any democratic transition.

At the beginning of March, the situation was still at a standstill. Colonel

Cussac mentions the blockage caused by a member of the Liberal Party, Mr. Ndasingwa, “a Tutsi close to the RPF,” who refused to communicate the list of “future ministers and deputies of the PL, despite the consensus that had emerged on Sunday on this issue between the head of State and the parties making up the current government.”⁸⁶ Other French dispatches mention much more decisive political blockages, notably the RPF’s refusal to allow the CDR to sit in the National Assembly. The repeated killings of Tutsi civilians, which were planned by the leaders of the extremist party during the previous year, probably convinced the RPF of the impossibility of building a common future in Rwanda with its members.

All of these events, which were fairly well observed by French representatives in Kigali, were warning signs of the genocide in the making. However, one aspect of the problem seems to have escaped the attention of French analysts, that of the programmed rupture between the President of the Republic and the radicals of the Northern Clan, the latter considering that the political openness displayed by the head of State made him unfit to represent their camp.

On 6 April 1994, the wave of political assassinations reached its climax with the attack on the presidential plane.

4.2 THE ATTACK OF 6 APRIL 1994

The attack on the presidential plane on 6 April 1994 definitively destroyed the process of democratization of Rwandan political life, which had been painstakingly put in place since the signing of the Arusha Agreements. The French archives do not allow us to identify with certainty the organizers of the attack. They do, however, provide an overview of the various theories that flourished immediately after the attack, offering some clues to explain the uncertainty that persists to this day, and showing how preconceived and strongly held ideas influence the analysis of a certain number of political leaders.

4.2.1 *Chronicle of a feared attack*

President Juvénal Habyarimana traveled in a Falcon

50 donated by France⁸⁷ and manned by a French crew. Research conducted during the Quilès mission sheds light on the employment contract of Messrs. Héraud, Minaberry and Perrine that was signed between the Ministry of Cooperation and the company SATIF.⁸⁸ The French crew of the Falcon 50, dispatched to Rwanda and made up of former military personnel, undeniably reassured President Habyarimana, who made no secret of the fact that his life was under threat. He therefore did not want the crew to be replaced, all the more so since Rwanda did not have any personnel, pilots or mechanics, with the required qualifications and experience.⁸⁹

4.2.1.1 FEARS

For several months, the Rwandan president, under pressure from the most radical members of the CDR and MRND, had been postponing day after day the establishment of the government of national accord provided for in the Arusha accords. As noted earlier in this report, clear signals of hostility to President Habyarimana were being sent by radical Hutu factions, including violent demonstrations and political assassinations.⁹⁰ In this bloody context, the Rwandan president feared for his life.⁹¹ Rumors of an attack reached the ears of the aircraft's French pilots, as reported by a DGSE correspondent, who said that they were "practicing approaches at very low altitudes because they feared a possible missile attack."⁹² It was in this context that the presidential plane flew to Dar-es-Salam, Tanzania, on 6 April 1994.

4.2.1.2 THE DAR-ES-SALAM CONFERENCE

The archives that we have been able to consult contain little information on this international meeting on Rwanda, which brought together the leaders of Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. In contradiction to what will often be asserted later, a telegram from the French ambassador to Tanzania states that the participants did not achieve any real results. The Tanzanian president's introductory speech,

marked by a certain weariness (“You can drive the cow to the river, but you can’t make it drink”), dealt separately and without originality with the problems of Rwanda (“The Arusha agreements must be implemented”), and then with Burundi (“The army of Burundi must represent the whole of Burundi”). The only result was the announcement that a mission composed of the foreign ministers of Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda would be sent to Bujumbura on an unspecified date.⁹³

This telegram therefore does not indicate any commitment on the part of Habyarimana to implement the Arusha accords. This “disappointing summit ended in tragedy,” the ambassador continued: “History will remember that it was on the way back from the Dar-es-Salam summit that the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi were killed following an attack on their plane.”⁹⁴

4.2.1.3 THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE ATTACK

The first message informing Paris of the attack went out on the evening of 6 April written by the acting defense attaché, Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin, who announced that “on 6 April 1994, at 9:15 p.m., the presidential plane of the Rwandan head of State crashed at Kanombe into the president’s private residence. According to initial testimonies, two explosions preceded the crash while the plane was in the process of landing at Kanombe International Airport.” He specifies that, in addition to President Habyarimana, the Burundian President, the Chief of Staff of the FAR, General Nsabimana, Colonel Sagatwa, head of presidential security, the three French crew members and a few other people were among the victims: “There were no survivors and no bodies were identifiable.”⁹⁵ An initial list of the victims was drawn up that evening by Ambassador Jean-Michel Marlaud.⁹⁶ The diplomatic and military archives for April 1994 do not, however, contain a more precise description of the attack. Nevertheless, an analysis by the DGSE very early on envisaged “the possibility of an organized and carefully prepared political plot, as shown by the execution of the attack, which was relatively complex on the technical level.”⁹⁷ Immediately, various theories began to circulate.

4.2.2 *Responsibility for the attack: presentation of the theories*

Accusations have been made against the French, Belgians and moderate Hutu. But the two main opposing theories that have been put forward are that either the RPF was responsible or Hutu extremists.

4.2.2.1 THE FRENCH

The alleged involvement of French soldiers in the attack was only mentioned in an article by the journalist Colette Braeckman, published on 22 June in the Belgian daily *Le Soir*, which was described as a “fabrication” by the French ambassador to Belgium.⁹⁸

4.2.2.2 THE BELGIANS

As early as 7 April, President Habyarimana’s daughter told the French ambassador in Kigali of her suspicions about Belgium, wondering if it “had not participated in the attack.”⁹⁹ On the night of the 8th to the 9th, Jean-Michel Marlaud observed that the “rumor that Belgians were behind the destruction of the presidential plane was indeed circulating in Rwanda.”¹⁰⁰ Rwandan representatives abroad were particularly active. At the UN, Jean Damascène Bizimana denounced the involvement of the Belgians in the attack. The French representative noted that these remarks “probably reflect the state of mind that reigns in this camp.”¹⁰¹ A little later in Kinshasa, the Rwandan ambassador accused Belgian UNAMIR soldiers of having shot down the plane. In front of his French counterpart, who was surprised by these remarks, he said he was “absolutely certain of their veracity, but without providing any evidence to support them.”¹⁰²

4.2.2.3 THE MODERATE HUTU

This thesis has not been very successful. It was mentioned by the RPF representative at the UN during a meeting with his French counterpart Jean-Bernard Mérimée in New York on 8 April. While the hypothesis of Belgian involvement seemed to him “totally unfounded,” he mentioned a rumor that targeted the military supporters of a moderate minister

and leader of the PSD, Félicien Gatabazi, who was assassinated on 21 February. “Gatabazi, who was originally from the south of the country, had supporters in the army among the young military classes from the same region. The latter, who had never been able to obtain satisfactory promotions, thus wanted to take revenge on President Habyarimana.”¹⁰³ The French ambassador to Uganda reported in the same vein the analysis of his Burundian colleague, according to whom “revenge by elements of the moderate opposition, convinced that President Habyarimana had ordered the February assassinations,” was “the most likely hypothesis.”¹⁰⁴ The DGSE was briefly of the same opinion. On 11 April, it considered it “possible that the attack was carried out by a faction of the army, close to the MDR party and mostly from the south of the country. The south of Rwanda, which is very opposed to President Habyarimana, a native of the north, has always refused to resume the fight against the RPF. It seems that this is the solution that the President was reduced to, after having exhausted all possible avenues for delaying the application of the Arusha Accords.”¹⁰⁵

4.2.2.4 THE RPF

The thesis of the responsibility of the RPF quickly became fashionable among the French authorities. As summarized in an analysis by the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs, the DAM, “while some attributed the attack to Hutu extremists opposed to power sharing, many, including the French ambassador, considered it more likely that the RPF was responsible for the death of President Habyarimana.”¹⁰⁶

As early as 7 April, in a memo that he sent to François Mitterrand and that the Secretary General of the Élysée Palace annotated with the words “very significant,” General Quesnot, the President’s Chief of Staff, presented the hypothesis of an RPF attack as “likely” - even if he specified that this theory “would have to be confirmed.”¹⁰⁷ This final precaution does not appear in the memo communicated the same day by Bruno Delaye, François Mitterrand’s Africa advisor, who simply writes that “the attack is attributed to the RPF.”¹⁰⁸ A memo of 25 April written by Ambassador Marlaud develops this thesis: “The attack that cost the life of President Habyarimana

and which is the immediate cause of the events that Rwanda is experiencing today is probably the work of the RPF.” The recomposition of the political landscape would prevent him from taking power, and international opinion had turned against him. So it seems

that he was tempted to repeat the scenario of January-February 1993: to push the FAR to the brink in order to have the pretext of resuming the fighting. Several incidents in the demilitarized zone and assassinations were not enough to provoke a reaction from the Rwandan authorities, who feared a trap of this type. The death of the President and the main army and security officials, by triggering a cycle of murderous reprisals by part of the Presidential Guard against the opposition and the Tutsi, gave a pretext for RPF military intervention.¹⁰⁹

This rapidly adopted position also appears in a series of documents that surfaced during the work of the Quilès Mission, in particular a “chronological memo” prepared by the DRM that lists documents “tending to show that the RPF, with the complicity of Ugandan President Museveni, was responsible for the attack.”¹¹⁰

4.2.2.5 Hutu extremists

In the days following the attack, the responsibility of Hutu extremists was ruled out by the DGSE for two reasons. First, one of the main leaders of the “Zero Network,” Colonel Sagatwa, was on the plane. Secondly, President Habyarimana is said to have finally sided with the extremists, agreeing to resume the fight against the RPF.¹¹¹

This theory, however, was immediately considered the most likely by several foreign States. As early as 7 April, the Americans “strongly” suspected “a faction of the Rwandan armed forces” of having committed the attack.¹¹² The Belgians, for their part, observed that the missiles seemed to have been fired from an area controlled by the FAR.¹¹³

This theory is also put forward by the RPF, as reported, for example, in a DGSE analysis memo of 10 May 1994:

According to the Tutsi rebels of the RPF, the presidential plane was shot down by the most radical fraction of the Rwandan government. The attack was prepared by the Minister of Defense, Augustin Bizimana, who at the last moment

*found an excuse not to board the plane to Dar-es-Salam. According to the RPF, the most radical Hutus were increasingly unsympathetic to President Habyarimana, feeling betrayed by his decision to implement the Arusha Accords and deal with the RPF. This version is supported by the fact that the presidential plane was hit on final approach while flying low over a garrison of Rwandan government forces. Finally, the rebels add that when the news was announced, more than 90% of those killed by the Presidential Guard and the FAR were Tutsi, which would never have happened if they had prepared the attack themselves and taken the basic precaution of warning the Tutsi community.*¹¹⁴

The moderate opposition shares this analysis. “According to members of the PSD,” the DGSE explained in early July 1994, the attack “was fomented by Augustin Bizimana, who could not accept the Arusha Accords.”¹¹⁵ The DGSE added a week later: “According to a moderate Rwandan Hutu figure, Colonel Bagosora, former director of the cabinet of the Minister of Defense, and Colonel Serubuga, former chief of staff of the FAR, were the main organizers of the attack of 6 April 1994.”¹¹⁶ “The fact that Colonel Bagosora belonged to the death squads gives consistency to these allegations,” commented the DGSE.¹¹⁷ From this date of 12 July, the DGSE definitively adopted this hypothesis. On 5 September, it stated that the “Zero Network” was “suspected of being at the center of the plot that led to the attack of 6 April 1994.”¹¹⁸

The most complete exposition of this thesis appears in a document dated 22 September, 1994, entitled “Hypothesis of the DGSE on responsibility for the attack on President Habyarimana’s plane.”¹¹⁹ This hypothesis, which seems “the most plausible” to the DGSE, tends to “designate Colonel Bagosora, former director of the cabinet of the Minister of Defense, and Colonel Serubuga, former Chief of Staff of the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) as the main instigators of the attack of 6 April 1994.” Their forced retirement by President Habyarimana in 1992, “when they were hoping to obtain the rank of general, [...] was the source of heavy resentment and a noticed rapprochement with Mrs. Agathe Habyarimana, often considered as one of the main brains of the radical tendency of the former regime.”

The DGSE reports the statements of an officer of the FAR according to which “unusual activity was perceptible at the beginning of

April 1994, shortly before the attack, in the garrisons of the capital.”

On 1 April, 1994, a memo was allegedly signed authorizing the logistical transfer of fuel, collective weapons and ammunition, in much larger than average quantities, from the Kanombe military camp to the Kimihura camp, occupied by the Presidential Guard (PG). Two companies of paratroopers (about 300 men) were transferred from Kanombe to Kimihura at the same time. The movements were carried out discreetly, in order to avoid the controls of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR). According to the officer, this exceptional reinforcement was intended to allow the PG, now alone at the Kanombe camp, to carry out its work on 6 April while leaving its Kimihura camp under the protection of paratroopers. The Kimihura camp was, in fact, located in the immediate vicinity of the National Development Council (CND-Parliament), where the 600 men of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) protection battalion were located.¹²⁰

The DGSE then points out that Colonel Bagosora seems to have tried to take power in the hours following the attack.

Assisted by a dozen recently promoted young officers, General Rusatira, commander of the Kigali military academy, who later distanced himself from the former government, is said to have prevented him from doing so. Colonel Bagosora, following this setback, reportedly recalled all retired officers to the army in order to gain their support. Members of the presidential delegation who remained in Dar es Salaam after the attack was announced also testified that Colonel Bagosora had tried to establish himself as the new strongman in Rwanda.¹²¹

The DGSE’s analysis continues with a presentation of the “Zero Network,”¹²² “suspected of being at the center of the plot that led to the attack of 6 April 1994 and of being responsible for the systematic planning of the abuses.” The members of this group are said to have considered as early as 1991 that “if President Habyarimana accepted power sharing, it would go to the Hutus in the South. The possibility of a coup d’état aimed at overthrowing Mr. Habyarimana in order to replace him with another officer from Gisenyi was then mentioned.”¹²³ “A list of the names of the main masterminds of the abuses has been circulating in Rwanda over the last few months,” reports the DGSE.

Several officers on this list are said to be under the protection of Mrs. Agathe Habyarimana and her brother, Protée Zigiranyirazo, alias “Mr. Z,” both of whom are said to be the real brains behind the organization. This group, nicknamed “Madame’s colonels,” (1) is sometimes referred

to as the main sponsor of the attack that cost President Habyarimana his life on 6 April 1994. This operation was allegedly premeditated for a long time by the Hutu extremists.

(1) These are Colonels Bagosora, Serubuga, Nkundiyé and Anatole Nsengiyumva.¹²⁴

The DGSE concludes by recalling the role of the “death squads” of the Zero Network in the ethnic and political violence of recent years in Rwanda.

The persons concerned by these accusations [...] have always denied any personal involvement and denounced the very existence of the “death squads” that operate clandestinely. However, there is a strong body of evidence and disturbing facts that give some credence to these accusations. Moreover, the televised appearance of Colonel Bagosora, a member of the “Zero Network”, interviewed by journalists on the program “La marche du siècle: états d’urgence” (France 3, 21 September 1994), who became particularly threatening following direct questions concerning his responsibility for the origin of the massacres, says a great deal about his character and his motivations.¹²⁵

The next day, the DGSE returned to this television program:

Eloquent testimonies support the thesis of a plot prepared and planned by Hutu extremists. The interview with Colonel Bagosora, former director of the cabinet of the Minister of Defense, considered - notably by the DGSE - to be one of the main people responsible for the attack of 6 April 1994, is particularly revealing. The interested party, losing all restraint in the face of the journalist’s “indiscretion,” finally threatened him physically.¹²⁶

The DGSE thus adopted a clear position. As it summarized in December 1994: “Hutu radicals seem to be behind the attack on President Habyarimana.”¹²⁷ With the exception of the responsibility of moderate Hutus from the South, which had seduced it in the days following the attack,¹²⁸ the DGSE has always rejected the other theories. Thus, on 10 May, 1994, it explained that it did not give “any credibility to the thesis, which only the Rwandan interim government is committed to, according to which the plane was targeted by the Belgian army.”¹²⁹ Nor is it convinced of the RPF’s guilt, either for political reasons (“[T]he second hypothesis is that the RPF alone prepared the attack. One may nevertheless wonder about the political advantages of such a headlong rush, since the nature of the Arusha agreements clearly favors the RPF”¹³⁰) or practical reasons:

The hypothesis that these rockets could have been fired by armed RPF elements is not satisfactory. In order to approach the airport, it is necessary to pass through several military roadblocks and the area is strictly forbidden to civilians. In addition, patrols of gendarmes and UNAMIR soldiers patrol the area. The rockets therefore appear to have been fired by well-trained personnel who were already within the security perimeter of the airport.¹³¹

4.2.3 Reasons for the uncertainty about the perpetrators

While some theories seem more convincing than others, one fact remains: they are still only suppositions, based on the feasibility of the attack and, above all, on an assessment of reasonable motives, of the reasons for shooting at the presidential plane or not. As a DGSE analysis noted on one occasion, “these elements are based only on logical deductions and not on evidence.”¹³² This situation is explained in particular by the absence of any trace of the observations made at the scene immediately after the attack, the absence of an immediate investigation, but also by the constant efforts at disinformation that have always surrounded the subject.

4.2.3.1 THE ABSENCE OF TRACES OF THE IMMEDIATE FINDINGS

On 6 April at 9:30 p.m., the commander of Saint-Quentin sent Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin an oral report on the crash of the presidential plane.¹³³ However, the archives bear no trace of the observations made on the spot by the French soldier who lived in the Kanombe camp and went immediately to the scene. All we learn from the meager report of his hearing by the Quilès mission is that he was looking for the plane’s black box but was informed by Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin that the plane may not have had one.¹³⁴ The absence of a black box was also mentioned by other actors interviewed in 1998.¹³⁵

In general, the archives are hardly conclusive on the question of the black box. They offer mostly rumors and denials. While the Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs indicated that he was waiting for the results of the analysis of the black box,¹³⁶ a member of Belgian military intelligence believed that he had seen it on the plane that was taking members of the Habyarimana family back to France.¹³⁷

When the special rapporteur appointed by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Mr. Degni-Segui, asked France for the black box, the Department told Ambassador Marlaud what response to give: “You may specify to the Special Rapporteur, with some surprise, that the French government is not in possession of the “black box” of the crashed presidential plane and that it would be appropriate to question the interim government as a matter of priority.”¹³⁸

4.2.3.2 THE ABSENCE OF AN IMMEDIATE INVESTIGATION

Various investigations into the attack took place later, in France, Belgium and Rwanda. But all efforts to open an immediate international investigation failed. However, as the UN Secretary General had pointed out in early June 1994 with regard to the “accident” of the presidential plane: “With time, the evidence fades and the witnesses disperse, which will make the work of establishing the facts difficult.”¹³⁹

In reaction to the allegations against it, Belgium contacted the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).¹⁴⁰ In France, on 7 April, the Quai d’Orsay wanted the UN Secretary General to create an “international mission of inquiry.” On the French side, they wanted to believe that such an announcement could “contribute to calming tensions.”¹⁴¹ However, this opinion was not shared by a number of Mr. Boutros-Ghali’s collaborators, who feared that identifying the perpetrators of the attack would have the opposite effect. Their reasoning clearly shows the climate of extreme violence and intimidation that reigned in Rwanda at the time: either the RPF was guilty and the Tutsi would pay the price, or it was not and the impartiality of the commission would be called into question:

*Some of Mr. Boutros Ghali’s collaborators fear that such an initiative will not ease tensions, but rather provoke new violence when the conclusions of this mission are known. If the fact-finding mission concludes that the RPF was responsible, the Hutu will see this as a signal to unleash new vengeance. On the other hand, if the mission comes to non-decisive conclusions, it will be accused of partiality and of playing into the hands of the Tutsi. In both cases, the United Nations will risk paying the price for being too visibly involved.*¹⁴²

The creation of an *ad hoc* commission was therefore ruled out, and the statement adopted by the Security Council on 7 April merely “invites the General Secretariat to gather all useful information concerning the incident that cost the lives of the two presidents.”¹⁴³ In the months that followed, France insisted on the need to carry out this investigation on several occasions,¹⁴⁴ “[I]t would be helpful,” the Department wrote in May, “to include a reference to the statement of 7 April calling on the Secretary General to investigate responsibility for the attack on the presidential plane.”¹⁴⁵ There is no justification for emphasizing “serious violations” of human rights while ignoring the attack:

On the other hand, the revised draft makes no mention of the report requested of the Secretary General (by the 7 April statement) on the presidential plane crash, while it recalls the investigation requested by the 30 April statement on serious violations of international humanitarian law. It is difficult to see what justifies such a difference in treatment between the two investigations expected by the Security Council: the Secretary General remains in control of the conditions under which these investigations should be conducted. You will therefore insist that the request for information on the attack on the presidential plane be included in the preamble (§12) and, if possible, in the operative part (§13), even if the current conditions on the ground make it difficult to satisfy immediately.¹⁴⁶

4.2.3.3 CONSTANT EFFORTS AT MISINFORMATION

Regularly, documents appear with the claim to establish the identity of those responsible for the attack. While the French authorities are somewhat vigilant, these attempts at manipulation do little to create a climate conducive to the emergence of the truth.

In the archives of the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DRM), an undated document whose author is not identified relates a meeting in March 1994 with Eugène Nahimana, who allegedly explained that a Belgian commando unit was preparing to carry out an attack against the president. The author wonders whether his interlocutor is not trying to manipulate him.¹⁴⁷

At the end of July 1994, a DGSE agent reported an alleged RPF statement dated 14 January, 1994, which claimed to be thinking about

how to destroy the presidential plane (“*We examine with our advisors how to destroy his aircraft*”). “It is so big that I have doubts about its authenticity,” the agent commented.¹⁴⁸ In August, a former Rwandan dignitary gave the same document to the French embassy in Belgium, “to complete the French file.” It was a letter on RPF letterhead dated 14 January, “addressed to all members of the RPF in Rwanda and abroad, and which indicated that they were examining how to destroy Habyarimana’s plane.” The ambassador passed it on to the Department, “despite questions about its authenticity.”¹⁴⁹

The attempts at disinformation did not stop in 1994.¹⁵⁰ Several observers seem to see the hand of the FAR in exile behind certain documents communicated in 1998 to the Quilès mission. Alleged photographs of the missiles used in the attack aroused the ire of the rapporteur Bernard Cazeneuve, to whom an expert opinion revealed that these missiles had not been fired: “They’re making fun of Parliament... It’s a scam...”¹⁵¹ François Léotard, during his hearing before the mission, supports the thesis of the responsibility of the RPF.¹⁵²

4.2.4 *Preconceived ideas and confirmation bias*

In the absence of irrefutable material evidence, the thinking of actors is often guided by their previous convictions. As this report has already shown, French political and military leaders are driven by a certain hostility towards the RPF, which is perceived as a bloodthirsty foreign army.¹⁵³ The idea seems to be strongly anchored that it is through the RPF that misfortune arrives. Thus, when some observers identify a risk of massacres, or even genocide, they analyze it as a consequence of a possible invasion of part of the territory by the RPF. During the October 1990 war, the defense attaché Galinié expressed this idea on several occasions:

The Rwandan population in its vast majority would not accept that the northeastern part of the country be left in the hands of the invaders. It should be remembered that it was once through the northeast that the Tutsi arrived and that it was there (around Lake Mubazi) that they formed their first kingdom. This fact has today a particular echo in the collective memory and favors hasty comparisons. Consequently, anything that might appear to be a territorial abandonment in this region would certainly trigger serious abuses against the Tutsi

*populations in the interior, which would be either spontaneous or directly encouraged by the hardliners of the current regime, thus playing their own game.*¹⁵⁴

If the “Tutsi invaders wishing to regain the power lost in 1959” were to obtain part of the Rwandan territory, they would “probably re-establish in the north-east the disgraced regime of the first Tutsi kingdom that was once established there, this avowed or disguised re-establishment leading *in all likelihood* [handwritten addition] to the physical elimination of 500,000 to 700,000 Tutsi from the interior of the country by the Hutu, 7,000,000 individuals.”¹⁵⁵ The memo addressed in February 1993 by Dominique Pin and General Quesnot to François Mitterrand expresses the same idea in a few words: “The victory of the Tutsi ethnic group led by the RPF would undoubtedly lead to a Hutu ethnic upsurge whose consequences could be dramatic.”¹⁵⁶

This reasoning leads in a way to impute responsibility for the genocide to the RPF. Seeing the RPF as responsible for the attack that “triggered” the genocide fits perfectly into this preconceived reasoning, which leads to the retention of only those elements that are incriminating for the RPF. This confirmation bias is particularly visible in General Quesnot.

In a memo already cited from 7 April, the Chief of Staff immediately pointed to the probable responsibility of the RPF in the attack and emphasized that this hypothesis, if confirmed, would herald large-scale military operations.¹⁵⁷ This *a priori* position is not based on any factual element from Kigali. The paucity of available archives from the general staff does not allow for a precise assessment of the type of information that General Quesnot relied on to write this memo. It does, however, attest to a well-established representation of the Rwandan dossier, emphasizing the constant threat posed by the RPF.

By attributing the attack to the RPF, General Quesnot confirmed his fears. His “on-the-spot” analysis is undoubtedly based on information accumulated over the years by French military intelligence; in particular, that relating to the ground-to-air defense means available in the Great Lakes region, to which the Chief of Staff has always attached great importance. When, in 1991, Colonel Galinié announced that the Rwandan army had recovered

an SA 16 missile from the rebels,¹⁵⁸ General Quesnot passed on the information to the President of the Republic the very next day.¹⁵⁹ In June 1992, military intelligence produced a memo on the RPF's anti-aircraft resources, namely SA 7 and 16 missiles.¹⁶⁰ In September 1992, a summary memo from French military intelligence on the RPF again mentions the presence of ground-to-air Defense systems, stating: "SA 7 and SA 16 missiles for anti-aircraft artillery."¹⁶¹ In November of the same year, military intelligence still mentions the presence of SA 7 and SA 16 missiles in the means available to the RPF in the form of diagrams.¹⁶² The beginning of 1993 saw no change in intelligence on this subject, since a February memo repeated the one from June 1992.¹⁶³ A message from the Defense Attaché, Colonel Cussac, at the beginning of April 1993 seems to clarify and therefore temper the previous analyses. Indeed, while he persists in asserting that these missiles are part of the RPF arsenal, he nevertheless specifies their location: "The RPF has SA 7s and SA 16s for the protection of its command posts near the Ugandan-Rwandan border."¹⁶⁴

Thus, in the spring of 1993, French military intelligence no longer seems to question the presence of SA 7 and SA 16 anti-aircraft missiles in RPF arsenals, even if these weapons are identified as defensive and linked to the control of the airspace around RPF command posts. But this information hardly allows one to conclude, as General Quesnot did before the Quilès mission, that only the RPF had such missiles.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, the aforementioned message from the Defense attaché Galinié of 22 May 1991, insofar as it reveals that the Rwandan army had "recovered an SA 16 missile from the rebels," should lead one to believe that both sides were likely to have such weapons at their disposal.¹⁶⁶

This confirmation bias led a certain number of French officials, from the day after the attack and for a long time after the genocide, to present the responsibility of the RPF as a certainty, even though the intelligence services seemed much more reserved about this thesis. This representation also hindered the French authorities' understanding of the immediate aftermath of the attack and prevented a rapid reaction. In his aforementioned memo of 7 April, General Quesnot did not say a word about the targeted assassinations of political opponents

and the systematic massacres of Tutsi that raged in Kigali a few hours after the attack on the presidential plane.¹⁶⁷

4.3 THE DECISIVE DAYS OF 7 TO 14 APRIL: THE EXECUTION OF THE GENOCIDE AND OPERATION AMARYLLIS

4.3.1 *France faced with the political chaos in Rwanda*

4.3.1.1 THE IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ATTACK

The announcement of the attack on the presidential plane initially caused a moment of stupefaction and uncertainty in Rwanda, which did not last long. Within a few hours, the crash led to a general resumption and paroxysmal exacerbation of all the political, military, social and “ethno-racial” hostilities that had been tearing the country apart for years. How do the French authorities, who have been heavily involved in the “Rwandan question” for more than three years, react to the drama that is unfolding and developing before their eyes?

A memo from the General Directorate of External Security (DGSE) on 7 April attempts to draw a picture of the first chaotic events that followed the attack on the Rwandan president:

The situation in Kigali was very confused in the 2 hours following the death of Presidents Habyarimana and Ntaryamira on 6 April 1994, at approximately 9:00 p.m., due to the shock caused by the news, as well as a certain amount of hesitation observed at the level of the command of government forces. The Presidential Guard immediately blocked all the main accesses to the capital, and General Dallaire, commander of UNAMIR, gave the order to quadruple patrols in the city in coordination with the Rwandan National Guard. Calm was reportedly restored by midnight, with the population preferring to stay home for fear of further violence.

Small arms fire, but also gunfire, was recorded at dawn from the Kacyru military camp, 3 km northwest of Kigali. The shots were aimed at the CND buildings, where the RPF political delegation and its protection battalion are still stationed. The RPF cantonment is guarded by a UNAMIR unit. At the same time, elements of the Presidential Guard, stationed on the outskirts of the city, showed

great animosity towards the Prime Minister's escort unit, provided by UNAMIR. [...]. According to the Belgian soldiers who were monitoring the RPF protection battalion's cantonment, no shooting was recorded on the spot, implying direct responsibility of the RPF. On the other hand, a problem of coordination and unity of command within the government forces was observed during the night, as well as dissension between FAR and National Guard units.¹⁶⁸

In this memo, which was widely circulated, the French foreign intelligence service emphasized both the non-involvement of RPF forces in the events and the rapid, organized and methodical nature of the reaction of the Rwandan Presidential Guard. The latter, as soon as the news of the attack reached them, organized the cordoning off of the Rwandan capital, with the help of militiamen.

Thus, a few minutes after the attack, the Kanombe airport was completely sealed off by the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) and the Belgian UNAMIR soldiers present were disarmed. A first punitive expedition seems to have been carried out by soldiers of the Presidential Guard and para-commandos in the Masaka hill, the supposed site of the launch of the two missiles: there they carried out the first systematic assassinations of Tutsi. However, according to many witnesses, the rest of the night seemed "relatively calm" in Kigali¹⁶⁹ - just long enough for the leaders of the Hutu extremist forces to organize the storm.

At 9 p.m., a first crisis meeting of the Rwandan military high command was held at FAR headquarters. The chief of staff of the Ministry of Defense, Théoneste Bagosora, tried in vain to convince the senior officers of the FAR to take power.¹⁷⁰ Despite the persuasiveness of the retired colonel, the fifteen soldiers gathered did not agree. The two consultations with Roméo Dallaire and then with the special representative of the Secretary General Booh-Booh led to the same conclusion: for both men, the formation of a new military government would never be accepted by the international community.

The next day at 8 a.m., Colonel Bagosora met with the main leaders of the MRND, the presidential party: Théodore Sindikubwabo, former president of the National Development Council

- the transitional National Assembly set up by the Arusha Accords - was unofficially designated as interim president of Rwanda. Two hours later, in a new meeting with senior military officials, Colonel Bagosora failed once again to take the helm of a crisis committee: from now on, he will act in the shadow of his parallel networks, linked to the “Northern Clan.”¹⁷¹

The French ambassador in Kigali mentioned in a diplomatic telegram on the evening of 7 April that the Rwandan military high command had set up a “Committee of Public Salvation.” The information provided on this committee clearly shows that the French representative in Rwanda was a privileged interlocutor in the behind-the-scenes discussions that took place just after the attack:

[The committee] includes General Ndindiliyimana, chief of staff of the gendarmerie, Colonel Gatsinyi [sic], who commanded the non-commissioned officers’ school and became chief of staff of the army, and Colonel Rusatira, commander of the military academy (and appointed to chair the commission for the demobilization of soldiers under the Arusha accords).

The committee issued a communiqué stating that it would do its utmost to normalize the situation, stressing the need to create a climate conducive to the functioning of political institutions and the implementation of the Arusha Accords, calling on the population to remain calm and asking that the necessary measures be taken to restore security. General Ndindiliyimana told me that the committee hopes to meet tomorrow with the political parties to discuss ways to end the institutional vacuum. The ministers present at the embassy told me that they were in favor of such a meeting, while acknowledging that it would be difficult to organize.¹⁷²

Normalization of the situation does not seem to be Théoneste Bagosora’s primary concern. As soon as the first crisis meeting ended, he disappeared from circulation and, thanks to a parallel radio network, came into contact with the FAR shock units: with the death of the former chief of staff in the presidential plane, he had full authority over these extremist forces, which were the most closely linked with Hutu Power.

The dawn of 7 April was as turbulent as the night had seemed calm. A few hours after the attack, multiple barriers were put in place on the main roads of Kigali, and then throughout Rwanda. As with every political “emotion,” they were mainly erected and maintained by *Interahamwe* militiamen of the MRND and the *Impuzamugambi*

of the CDR. It seems that on this occasion, the two militias - although often rivals in the political demonstrations of the early 1990s - merged into a single entity that was to become one of the most effective agents of the Tutsi genocide. These barriers, of which the young militiamen have a long experience, allow them to arrest Tutsi people by the indication of ethnicity on their identity cards. And more often than not, to execute them on the spot.

From the very first hours, RTLM radio imposed itself as the voice of genocidal intentions: with a very festive tone, punctuated by the murderous songs of Simon Bikindi, its star hosts such as Valérie Béréméki launched their first direct calls for the murder of Tutsi: Attributing the attack on Juvénal Habyarimana to the RPF and its Belgian allies, they denounce an imminent RPF attack, and make incessant calls for the “cleansing of the country” and the “disappearance of the cockroaches.”¹⁷³

In the early afternoon, the defense attaché in Kigali, Colonel Cussac, reported on the massacres that had begun in the Rwandan capital, specifying that “as soon as daybreak came, patrols of the Presidential Guard began to methodically scour all the neighborhoods of Kyovu, Kimihurua, Gikondo, and Remera in search of opposition politicians and Rwandans of Tutsi ethnicity in order to eliminate them.”¹⁷⁴ At the same time, Ambassador Marlaud also alerted Paris to the rapid deterioration of the situation. He identified quite precisely the victims of what appeared to be political cleansing, but without yet perceiving the extreme violence:

Since this morning, armed elements, notably from the Presidential Guard, have been making arrests, conducting kidnappings, and undoubtedly murders.

Mr. Twagiramungu told me that the Minister of Information (MDR) and his family were abducted by the Presidential Guard and taken to a camp. The Minister of Agriculture (President of the PSD) was reportedly arrested or on the run. This information was confirmed by the gendarmerie, which remains legal but powerless. They have called in UNAMIR, but to no avail for the moment. Among the other arrests mentioned by various sources, I note the names of Mr. Kavarugunda, president of the Constitutional Court (who had clearly opposed the head of State in recent weeks) and Ngango (a prominent member of the PSD, considered to be the favorite candidate for the election to the presidency of the National Assembly) Prime Minister Uwilingiyimana was also reportedly attacked at her home. She and her family reportedly found very precarious shelter in a

*UNDP building. Finally, it would appear that the Director of the Cabinet of the Minister of Foreign Affairs was killed.*¹⁷⁵

In fact, the entire democratic opposition and the main actors in the Arusha Accords were decimated in a few hours: the Prime Minister (Agathe Uwilingiyimana), the President of the Constitutional Court (Joseph Karavugunda), the future President of the National Assembly (Félicien Ngango), former ministers (Frédéric Nzamurambamo, Faustin Rucogoza, Landoald Nadsingwa - the latter a major negotiator of the accords - were savagely and systematically murdered, along with their families, by Hutu extremists during the two days of April 7 and 8. A particular DGSE file analyzed three days later that: “The systematic purge, undertaken by the Presidential Guard, was aimed at revenge against the pro-democracy supporters who had put the formerly undivided domination of the presidency to the test. It also consisted of preventing any constitutional succession that might keep Mrs. Uwilingiyimana’s transitional government in power.”¹⁷⁶ How, then, could the French authorities continue to invoke the Arusha Accords as a prospect for restoring peace in Rwanda?

4.3.1.2 THE FIRST REACTIONS OF THE FRENCH AUTHORITIES IN PARIS

In Paris, the first political reaction to the tragic events in Kigali seemed measured, to say the least. On the morning of 7 April, a first crisis meeting on the Rwandan situation was organized at the Quai d’Orsay. It brought together the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alain Juppé, his chief of staff, Dominique de Villepin, and Jean-Marc Rochereau de La Sablière, Director of African and Malagasy Affairs. The military was represented by General Huchon, head of the Military Cooperation Mission, and the President of the Republic by Bruno Delaye, Africa advisor to François Mitterrand. An almost unanimous position quickly seemed to emerge: France must not, under any circumstances, return to the “Rwandan trap” and put itself back on the front line in a conflict in which it had been involved for more than three years. For the participants, French nationals do not seem to be threatened and no new military intervention is envisaged. The only

dissenting voice was that of General Huchon: he predicts terrible massacres in response to the assassination of Juvénal Habyarimana.¹⁷⁷

The spokesperson for the Quai d'Orsay confirmed in a press briefing following the meeting that the French community "does not give rise to any particular concern at the present time."¹⁷⁸

Bruno Delaye, more realistic, alerted the President of the Republic that same day to the institutional danger created by the 6 April attack and by the behind-the-scenes maneuvers of the Hutu extremists, of which he must have received the first echoes: "Since the institutions of the transition have not yet been set up, the death of the President leaves the country without any recognized authority (the government and parliament have not been put in place). There are fears of a military coup."¹⁷⁹

For its part, the DGSE distributed an important memo on 8 April, offering an initial, detailed analysis of the crisis situation in Kigali. Pointing more specifically to the methodical murders of democratic political leaders, the analyst uses a very regionalist reading of events:

The crisis that is currently raging in Kigali is said to be the result of latent opposition between Hutu from the north and the south. Already, some Hutu officers from the south of the country have formed a crisis unit and are ready to take matters into their own hands.

The reaction of the Presidential Guard, after the announcement of the death of the head of State, is eloquent. One of its officers is reported to have declared, on behalf of his unit, that the death of "their" president was due to the opposition.

In fact, the abuses perpetrated by the Presidential Guard since Wednesday evening have targeted the main opposition leaders, primarily those from southern Rwanda: the Prime Minister, Mrs. Agathe Uwilingiyimana, and the Minister of Information, both from the MDR, the main opposition party, were assassinated. Similarly, the president of the PSD, Minister of Agriculture, and a leader of the PL were shot dead.

The rest of the memo shows a constant focus on the RPF's alleged intentions and on saving the negotiating framework of the Arusha Accords at all costs. These two thought patterns were to mark many of the analyses sent back to Paris during those dramatic days.

The fact that the opposition was systematically decapitated did not fail to highlight the ambiguous position of the RPF, which for the moment was

ostensibly neutral. However, further provocations, including massacres of Tutsi by the Presidential Guard, could force the movement's leadership to abandon restraint and use the pretext of disorder to attain power, with all the repercussions that would entail both in Rwanda and in Burundi. Politically, however, it seems unlikely that the RPF would find any advantage in doing so, if only because of the presence of UNAMIR in Kigali and the benefits of the Arusha agreement.

But the most surprising analysis comes at the end of the document, where the writer - or his informants - show little understanding of the moment, but even less knowledge of the Rwandan actors involved:

*According to some authorities from the south of the country, the main issue at stake is to bring the Presidential Guard to its senses, so as not to provide a pretext for RPF action. A group of Hutu officers from southern Rwanda is ready to play this role, provided that the international community recognizes them and gives them the means to do so. A trio of three officers seems to be emerging from this group: General Ndindiliyimana, originally from Butare (southern Rwanda), chief of staff of the Gendarmerie Colonel Gatsinzi, Chief of General Staff of the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR), who is acting as interim Chief of Staff for Colonel Nsabimana, who was also killed in the presidential plane (...)
Colonel Bagosora, Director of Cabinet of the Minister of Defense and cousin of President Habyarimana. He is close to the Presidential Guard and could potentially act as an effective interface between government forces and the Presidential Guard.¹⁸⁰*

This last analysis shows a serious misjudgment by the DGSE agent. It makes the three strongmen of the FAR staff into people capable of bringing the Hutu extremists to their senses, at a time when they are organizing - or at best covering up - the systematic assassinations of political reformers, and the first genocidal massacres of the Tutsi community. The error of judgment is particularly focused on Colonel Bagosora, a prominent member of the "Northern Clan" and one of the main agents of the genocidal process that prepared the outbreak of the events of 7 April.¹⁸¹ This misunderstanding seems to be due to a confusion made by the writer with another crisis committee formed by reformist military personnel on the

morning of 7 April.¹⁸² This committee was intended to support the government of Agathe Uwilingiyimana - without knowing that at the same time its principal members were being assassinated.

4.3.1.3 SUPPORT FOR A FALSELY LEGITIMATE POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE: THE INTERIM RWANDAN GOVERNMENT (IRG)

On 7 April, a number of Rwandan political figures came to the French embassy in Kigali to request protection and asylum for themselves and their families. Jean-Michel Marlaud having given instructions to receive all political leaders who felt threatened, the embassy already received on Thursday evening no less than four ministers and their families, the director of the National Bank, and a member of parliament.¹⁸³ Among them is Fernand Nahimana, accompanied by his wife and four children. He was about to be appointed Minister of Higher Education in the new government and is best known as one of the founders of the extremist radio station RTLM. The next day at noon, Jean-Michel Marlaud reported that more than 90 people had taken refuge in the embassy, including ten ministers, the directors of the Court of Auditors, the Planning Department and the National Bank of Rwanda, as well as several senior civil servants.¹⁸⁴ Among all these personalities welcomed with their families in the premises of the consulate, at the entrance of the French embassy, only Alphonse Nkubito, public prosecutor and president of the collective of human rights associations, belongs to the political opposition.¹⁸⁵ And he was welcomed because the Belgian embassy did not want him there for security reasons. All the other refugees are supporters of the deceased president Habyarimana. From the archives, the premises they occupy in the French embassy seem to be the point of departure or arrival for many displacements, a privileged setting for the political and military dealings of the moment - more or less out of the ambassador's control.

Thus Jean-Michel Marlaud testified that on Friday, 8 April, a preparatory meeting on the constitution of a new interim government was held in his embassy. The diplomat indicated in a telegram that "during a preliminary meeting with the refugee ministers at the embassy, the following outline was drawn up: Fill the

institutional vacuum, asking parties that can do so to replace the four dead or missing ministers and the prime minister, and appointing an interim successor to the head of State; get the army to take over uncontrolled elements of the Presidential Guard and call for an immediate halt to the fighting; reaffirm commitment to the Arusha Accords and the will to implement them.”¹⁸⁶ The ambassador, who was very well informed, said that a meeting of the political parties and the military crisis council was being held at the Ministry of Defense in Kigali: “The leaders of the MRND (presidential party) and Mr. Mugenzi, president of the PL, are already at the Ministry of Defense, where they should be joined shortly by the MDR. The president of the PDC will join them if he can be contacted. Only the PSD, whose leaders are all dead or on the run, will be absent.”¹⁸⁷

At 8 p.m., the French ambassador was able to transmit to Paris the composition of the new Interim Rwandan Government (IRG): it had been formed at the Ministry of the Armed Forces - and not at the French embassy - in the presence of the military “public salvation committee” and therefore probably of Théoneste Bagosora. Jean-Michel Marlaud announced that the new head of State was Théodore Sindikubwabo and that the government was “reconstituted” with Jean Kabanda [sizi] as prime minister. He specifies that the other ministries are divided between personalities from the MDR, PSD and PL - all democratic opposition parties.¹⁸⁸ He fails to mention that nine of the 19 portfolios are allocated to members of the presidential MRND¹⁸⁹ and that the representatives of the opposition parties are all from the extremist “Hutu Power” tendency that has asserted itself and split these parties since November 1993.

His comment following the appointment of the new ministers of the interim government may seem disconcerting: “The distribution of ministerial portfolios among the political parties is in accordance with the protocol on power sharing. The criticisms that could be made, if any, could relate to two points: the representativeness of the PSD members who attended the meeting (the steering committee was decapitated), the shift in distribution between tendencies within the MDR (Ms. Uwilingiyimana, who was close to Mr. Twagiramungu, was replaced by the “MDR power” candidate).¹⁹⁰ The

conflict resolution plan proposed by the Arusha Accords still seems to be the priority reference to which not only the French diplomat clings, but also a part of the Rwandan liberal opposition that is still alive. However, the violent disappearance of the Rwandan democratic forces, and the de facto sidelining of the RPF, clearly render the “Arusha” framework obsolete. At least in its essence, but not in its instrumentalization, which was still practiced for several weeks by many French and Rwandan actors - *genocidaires* first.

With more discernment, a memo distributed by the DGSE the following day, 9 April, emphasizes that the interim government that was formed in Kigali “is characterized neither by its openness nor by its balance” since “the main leaders of the opposition, who were in favor of the political integration of the RPF, had either already been assassinated or ignored.” For the analyst, its composition is such that it will be difficult to avoid a resumption of fighting by the FAR with the RPF: “Certain Hutu personalities close to the government admit in private that the reactionary nature of the interim government is not likely to elicit a conciliatory attitude from the RPF.”¹⁹¹

On the morning of that Saturday, when the first French soldiers of Operation Amaryllis had set foot in Rwanda, the ambassador informed the Quai d’Orsay of a telephone meeting he had had with the new interim president of Rwanda. Théodore Sindikubwabo was keen to explain to him the intentions behind the formation of his government, namely “to avoid an institutional vacuum, to provide the international community with interlocutors, to continue contacts with the RPF and to ensure the security of the population.” As a result, the ambassador reported the new president’s desire to “ask for help from the international community and first of all from France.” According to his interlocutor, this assistance “should not be limited to evacuating foreign nationals and leaving the Rwandans to their own devices.”¹⁹² The French diplomat relayed these requests without making any comments. From mid-April onwards, President Sindikubwabo became one of the main state officials responsible for the genocidal massacres, organized with the complicity of the prefects and *bourgmestres* throughout Rwanda.

On the evening of 9 April, Jean-Michel Marlaud sent another diplomatic telegram to Paris, this time reporting a meeting with several ministers of the new interim government. This delegation asked for international support to obtain a cease-fire: "This appeal was addressed to the entire international community, but primarily to France. We must (*sic*) go further than the current contingent, help the Rwandan authorities to re-establish order, prevent the RPF from upsetting the political balance of the Arusha Accords through a military victory."¹⁹³ A concomitant memo from Colonel Jacques Lasserre to Edouard Balladur is along the same lines: "The new Rwandan government, which was set up in compliance with the Arusha decisions, is trying to restore calm; it has already asked that our forces remain on the ground, beyond the humanitarian evacuation operation."¹⁹⁴

The subtext of these remarks is obviously revealing of the expectations of the extremist Hutu junta, which stands in the shadow of the new political power; but it also denotes the permanence of old practices that have marked the Franco-Rwandan bilateral relationship for years.

The archives suggest that until the embassy was closed on 12 April, Jean-Michel Marlaud had numerous contacts with the IRG. Under pressure from the RPF, the latter left Kigali on the same date and began organizing and supervising the genocide of the Tutsi in the various prefectures of Rwanda.

4.3.2 The shift towards a new French military intervention

4.3.2.1 THE FEELING OF TOTAL INSECURITY IN KIGALI AND THE OBSESSIVE FEAR OF THE RPF

UNAMIR's inability to control the situation in Kigali, to protect Hutu opponents, certain ministers and Tutsi civilians from the massacres committed by the Presidential Guard and its affiliates, quickly became evident to the French authorities. Ambassador Marlaud noted that the UN force was unable to ensure that a meeting was held between the FAR headquarters, the representative of the

UN Secretary General and the “Western observers.” He informs Paris “that it is also unable to ensure the protection of Rwandan officials wanted by the Presidential Guard or certain military elements. Mrs. Uwilingiyimana (current Prime Minister) was finally arrested, and Mr. Twagiramungu (future Prime Minister), who had initially taken refuge with an American neighbor, has just told me that he is going to return to his home. UNAMIR was unable to reach his home to take him to safety. Landoald Ndasingwa (Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, leader of the ‘Lando faction’ of the PL) is reported to have been killed, as well as two Ghanaian peacekeepers responsible for his protection.”¹⁹⁵

The other fear of the French authorities is the constant threat, real or imagined, of a lightning attack on Kigali by the RPA, the armed wing of the RPF. However, the intelligence reports concordantly show that the military operations that immediately followed the attack of 6 April were carried out by the Rwandan Armed Forces - and in particular by the Presidential Guard.¹⁹⁶ In the early hours of Thursday, 7 April, the latter attacked the CND building with machine guns and then mortars, where a battalion of 600 RPA men were stationed under the Arusha Agreements. The latter returned fire and 300 of them fled from the National Assembly building to deploy around the Meridien Hotel. The redactor of the situation memo of 8 April added that “the RPF aggravated the situation by announcing in the evening that if order was not restored during the night, it would launch an all-out attack.”¹⁹⁷ This concern, directed primarily at the RPF - at the expense of the abuses committed at the same time by the FAR - is shared by the diplomatic authorities. In the evening, they expressed their extreme concern about the evolution of the situation in Rwanda, associating it directly with the “risk [that] the RPF would descend on Kigali from the north of the country.”¹⁹⁸

The defense attaché indicated that the RPF “seems to be carrying out a generalized attack,” adding, however, that “this information has been communicated to us by the FAR headquarters, but the information is still too confusing to be exploited. The Gisenyi sector is calm, according to the sector chief with whom the post has direct contact. The internal situation: abuses by armed groups

accompanied by machete-wielding gangs continue in the neighborhoods.”¹⁹⁹

4.3.2.2 THE PREMISES OF THE FRENCH INTERVENTION

In order to deal with the emergency, the General Staff reorganized its chain of command on the ground as soon as the events began. In the absence of Colonel Cussac, the Defense attaché in charge, who was away in France, the Chief of Staff appointed his deputy, Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin. Maurin received instructions concerning “a possible military operation to protect or even evacuate our nationals, if the situation required it.”²⁰⁰ The message that General Philippe Mercier, Chief of Staff to the Minister of Defense, sent to him mentions the first measures that should be taken in the event that an evacuation is envisaged: this should be conducted jointly with the Belgians and in liaison with UNAMIR. He was of course asked to follow the evolution of “the military situation in Rwanda, particularly in Kigali and if possible in the buffer zone. In liaison with the Embassy services, to keep the precise status of our nationals up to date, and as far as possible to keep you informed of the availability of the airport [...]. As far as security is concerned, to be able, at the request of the ambassador, to participate in the immediate protection of the diplomatic premises.”²⁰¹ At the same time, the Parisian staff organized an early warning alert of the units concerned, demanding “extreme confidentiality of these measures.”²⁰²

That same Thursday, 7 April, in the message that designated the replacement of the defense attaché, the Armed Forces General Staff informed Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin of the possibility of a military evacuation operation in Kigali.²⁰³ The message insisted in particular on the responsibility of the commander of the French forces in Bangui in the design of this operation. The next day, the latter submitted to the Parisian authorities a memo summarizing two intervention projects: one in Rwanda with Colonel Henri Poncet and his tactical staff (EMT), the other in Burundi with Colonel Patrice Sartre and his EMT.²⁰⁴ Two options were put forward for reaching Kigali: one based on an airlift of troops to Kigali, the other airborne.²⁰⁵ In both cases, it was emphasized that a minimum of two companies was needed and that

the possibility of air support from Jaguar aircraft should be considered.²⁰⁶

On the diplomatic side, it was with a palpable sense of urgency that the Quai d'Orsay questioned the ambassador for the first time in the afternoon of 7 April about the possibility of evacuating French nationals:

*The Department would like to know, as a matter of urgency, your feelings on the advisability of evacuating the French community. Please inform the Department urgently if you consider, in liaison with your Belgian colleague, that the deterioration of the situation in Kigali justifies such a measure, taking into account the delay of several hours necessary for the possible intervention of French forces already on alert in nearby countries. In the event of an evacuation, it is planned that the latter would intervene in support of the Belgian forces, hence the coordination with your Belgian colleague.*²⁰⁷

In the evening, Jean-Michel Marlaud suggested considering an evacuation, but thought that “a decision seems premature at this stage. The situation is still very fluid and can change either in the direction of a new aggravation or a certain stabilization.”²⁰⁸ Moreover, it should be emphasized that the French authorities did not want to undertake such an operation without consulting the international community. This was reflected in the efforts of the French representation at the UN to reach a consensus on the subject. The Secretary General of the United Nations himself requested a meeting of the Security Council before initiating evacuation operations.²⁰⁹ In Paris, there was a stated desire to place “our action within the framework of the UN.”²¹⁰ The exchanges that followed within the UN Council showed a certain reserve and, at the very least, guarantees were given “as to the character and limits of the operation: strictly humanitarian objective, duration reduced to the time necessary for the evacuation.”²¹¹

On the other hand, the French representative at the UN took care beforehand to talk to the RPF representative based in New York about the principle of an evacuation operation. The latter told him

that his superiors would never agree to have discussions with a “junta.” The RPF therefore ruled out any contact if the new government in Kigali were to be a government of the military..., that the RPF was willing to cooperate in facilitating the evacuation of foreign communities... but that evacuation operations would have to be carried out by forces that would act on an ad hoc basis. It was out of the question to accept a

*“French-style” operation in which troops would intervene to settle permanently in their theater of operation.*²¹²

These few lines summarize quite well the RPF’s distrust of France, considering any intervention in Rwanda in which French soldiers would be involved as an operation aimed directly at it.

4.3.2.3 THE TRIGGER: THE ASSASSINATION OF TWO FRENCH GENDARMES

The event that was undoubtedly decisive in the final decision to launch Operation Amaryllis was the assassination of two French gendarmes and the wife of one of them on the afternoon of 8 April.

Chief Warrant Officer Alain Didot and Chief Warrant Officer René Maïer were two military technical assistants, specialists in communications, who remained in Rwanda with 22 other cooperants after the departure of Operation Noroît in December 1993. During his mission, Gendarme Didot had ensured the security of the Kigali embassy’s communications and the communications network of the French development workers. But his military technical assistance also led him to train Rwandan soldiers and to maintain all the FAR radio sets. The presence of a large radio antenna on the roof of his villa located near Kanombe airport could have made him a designated victim - especially for the RPF.

The end-of-mission report by Colonel Cussac and Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin reveals that Chief Warrant Officer Didot opened the AMT radio network just after the attack and set up the Inmarsat antenna the next day, 7 April, at 8 a.m. The last contact would have been made with him at 14:30. On the same day, the document notes the following information: “5:30 p.m.: A radio report from the director of the Méridien in Kigali, Mr. Eric Lefèvre, mentions the assassination of the Didot couple by RPF elements. This information was confirmed at 6 p.m. by the Rwandan guards of the neighboring villas who had taken refuge at the Meridien.”²¹³

In a diplomatic telegram sent at 7.30 p.m. on the following day, 8 April, Ambassador Marlaud announced the terrible news: “According to concordant information, Chief Warrant Officer Didot and his wife

were murdered this afternoon.” There was no mention yet of Chief Warrant Officer Maier. The various testimonies gathered by the ambassador and his German colleague tend to show that it was an operation targeting a radio operator, who was working from his home, identified as the link in a French intelligence network. The diplomat thought that the RPF had committed these murders and was worried about the consequences of this hypothesis: “If the RPF has taken possession of Chief Warrant Officer Didot’s radio equipment, it may be listening in.” And he concluded at 7 p.m.: “The safety of French nationals is threatened and justifies the evacuation.”²¹⁴

A question arises: why is there a discrepancy of one day in the dating established by the document of the military assistance mission and that of the ambassador, which places the assassination not on the afternoon of 7 April, but on the afternoon of 8 April? The military information, coming from the field, is corroborated by a report from Lieutenant-Colonel Damy which dates the assassination to the afternoon of 7 April.²¹⁵ The information coming from the embassy is confirmed by the report of the end of the Amaryllis operation established by Colonel Poncet.²¹⁶ Is this an error? Or could this very sensitive information about the death of a French soldier and the probable theft of strategic equipment have been concealed by the French authorities for 24 hours? For what purpose? The cross study of the archives does not determine this.

In any case, upon hearing the news, President François Mitterrand took “the decision to ensure the immediate safety of our nationals.”²¹⁷ An interministerial meeting was set up at the Quai d’Orsay.²¹⁸ Two options were discussed. The first was for a military operation limited solely to the evacuation and protection of the French community. The second, defended by General Quesnot, advocated a much more ambitious military intervention: not only to protect and evacuate our nationals, but also to re-establish order in Kigali; better still, in the legacy of Operation *Noroît*, to stop the RPF offensive by interposing itself.

Always with the same concern of not getting bogged down again in the “Rwandan trap,” it was the first option - strongly supported by Prime Minister Édouard Balladur and Alain Juppé - that

took precedence. In the memo he sent to François Mitterrand after the meeting, General Quesnot presented the operation, called Amaryllis, as “a technical phase aimed at controlling the airport platform.” And he specified that “at this stage, there is no question of a general evacuation of the French community.”²¹⁹

The ambassador in Kigali was informed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at 9 p.m.: “In view of the risks presented by the situation in Rwanda, France has decided to conduct an EOP²²⁰ at the Kigali airport during the night in order to prepare for a possible evacuation of the French community.”²²¹ Fifty minutes later, however, a diplomatic telegram specified the initial conditions for evacuation: “You will therefore please, with the utmost discretion, consider those members of the French community or other foreign communities whose health, psychological or other situation would justify their departure as a priority. The persons concerned must not be informed in any way of this possibility before the arrival of the planes.”²²²

The military operation order was written and issued at 11:30 p.m. by General Germanos, deputy chief of staff. The arguments put forward in his introduction to justify the military operation show a fairly synthetic and precise perception of the events underway in Kigali:

To avenge the death of President Habyarimana, the head and deputy head of presidential security killed in the plane crash on the evening of 6 April, members of the Presidential Guard carried out retaliatory actions in the city of Kigali from the morning of 7 April:

Attack of the RPF battalion

Arrest and elimination of opponents and Tutsi

*Encirclement of UNAMIR's premises and restriction of its movements. In addition, UNAMIR suffered casualties. The Chief of Staff of the Gendarmerie and the new Chief of Staff attempted to regain control of the situation. The situation is not under control. France therefore decided to prepare an evacuation operation for its nationals, as their safety appeared to be threatened.*²²³

The orders for behavior given in the rest of the document show an asserted desire for neutrality and discretion, which was no doubt ill-adapted to the situation. Thus, the operation order specifies that “the French detachment will adopt a discreet attitude and

a neutral behavior with regard to the different factions. (...) The greatest discretion will be observed with respect to the media.”²²⁴

4.3.3 Operation Amaryllis: a new French military intervention in Rwanda

4.3.3.1 THE SETTING UP AND RUNNING OF THE MILITARY OPERATION

Barely four months after the departure of the last French soldiers from Operation Noroît, French military forces re-entered Rwandan territory on the night of April 8 to 9, 1994. However, this time they intervened in a much more modest theater of operations: for a period of a few days and with military personnel that, officially, did not exceed 500 men. On the morning of Saturday 9 April, the Chief of Staff, Admiral Jacques Lanxade, made it clear publicly that Operation Amaryllis was “an operation intended exclusively to allow the departure of French nationals.”²²⁵ The head of the Prime Minister’s military cabinet, Rear Admiral Patrick Lecointre, insisted behind the scenes on the same limitations of time and principle for the intervention, dictated, according to him, by the pressing threat of the RPF: “The possibility of the RPF arriving in Kigali makes it urgent to evacuate our nationals, leaving only a few ‘hard core’ soldiers to be defined. The military operation that we have set up must appear to be strictly humanitarian, French, or possibly Franco-American, which will facilitate its acceptance by the UN. It must be completed quickly and must not in any way imply that we are part of UNAMIR, whose fate depends solely on the United Nations.” He concluded his memo with a handwritten comment: “It is in our interest to move quickly and to withdraw as soon as the evacuation is completed; the RPF is hostile to us and its arrival, which is likely, will put us in difficulty.”²²⁶

A diplomatic telegram from the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs (DAM), sent the same day to all African embassies, displays the same restrictive matrix and shows the same illusions about the political future of Rwanda:

The sole objective of this operation is to allow the rapid departure of French nationals under sufficiently safe conditions. The operation had

*become urgent since yesterday, when a cooperant and his wife were murdered and the threats against our compatriots had increased [...] This is a temporary operation with a strictly humanitarian purpose that will not interfere in any way with the Rwandan political process. In this respect, we remain attached to the application of the Arusha agreements, the only chance for Rwanda to avoid chaos and massacres.*²²⁷

The two end-of-mission reports written by defense attachés Maurin and Cussac and Colonel Poncet²²⁸ provide a fairly complete picture of the military deployment of Operation Amaryllis. From the outset, the intervention seemed to be deployed in a chaotic environment with great efficiency and without major difficulties. It seems to have been constantly favored by an understanding, and sometimes a collaboration, of the Rwandan Armed Forces, part of which has nevertheless been violently attacking Kigali for two days.

Thus, on the night of Friday, 8 April, a military and technical assistance team ensured the security of the control tower at Kigali airport and the clearing of the runway, which had been obstructed for two days by vehicles placed by the FAR. This action enabled the first four aircraft of the Amaryllis detachment, C-160 Transalls, to land at Kanombe airport on Saturday, 9 April at 1:30 a.m. After a very quick “assault landing,” each at 30 second intervals, the aircraft landed 151 men, most of them from the 3rd RPIMa. By 2:45 a.m., all the buildings and the runway were under the control of French troops. A fifth C-160 transport aircraft landed at about 4:30 a.m. This first detachment, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin, had the initial mission of controlling “the airport platform.” The choice of Maurin for this delicate mission, which was subject to the goodwill of the FAR, could be justified by the very good relations that the French cooperant had with the Rwandan army: he had in fact acted as an “unofficial” advisor to the FAR Chief of Staff from April 1992 to December 1993.²²⁹

At 7 a.m., Jean-Jacques Maurin and Henri Poncet organized and planned the evacuation of the first nationals, locating three large assembly centers. The ambassador in Kigali informed Paris that the operation was proceeding satisfactorily and that

UNAMIR, the RPF (through the latter) and the Rwandan government had been informed of the French intervention.²³⁰ The first reconnaissance of the roads used for these “extractions” was carried out in the morning, with the constant concern, it seems, to avoid the city center, where the unrest and massacres were the most serious. In the afternoon and evening of 9 April, five new Transall aircraft transported 163 additional men, bringing the number of Amaryllis troops to 359. The mission could now be extended to include the “safe” evacuation of nationals, under the responsibility of Colonel Poncet, who officially became the commander of Operation Amaryllis.

All these elements led to an initial assessment of the French military intervention on the evening of 9 April. In particular, it was a matter of setting up “regrouping points, proceeding, in liaison with the diplomatic authorities, with evacuations using national air assets and, possibly, available allied resources, in the direction of: P1, Bujumbura; P2, Nairobi; P3, Bangui.”²³¹

On Sunday 10 April, three new C 160s from Bangui brought in 105 additional men from the 8th RPIMa, as well as four armored vehicles. On Monday 11 April, 34 soldiers (including a group equipped with Milan missiles) were added to the force, bringing the total number of Amaryllis soldiers to 497. On site, two units were assigned to control the airport, and one unit was deployed “in town.” Three sections protected each evacuation center, and a fourth provided security for the French Embassy. The most delicate mission of the operation, the transfer of nationals, is assigned to specialized detachments or CRAP units.²³²

4.3.3.2 TENSE, HIGHLY TARGETED EVACUATIONS

The evacuation of French and Western nationals

In the mind of the French command, the evacuation of nationals should not be carried out by force. The deployment in Kigali of a large detachment of the 1st RPIMa was undoubtedly intended to ensure complex extractions due to the location of the candidates for departure. In a directive he sent to Colonel Poncet, General

Régnault, who was monitoring the operation, reminded him that these evacuations had to be designed in conjunction with the Rwandan authorities:

*You will adopt an attitude that is as conciliatory as possible. You will only resort to force at the very last resort, in case of legitimate defense extended to the people under your protection. In this context, you will give priority to the specialized detachment for possible extractions or any particular operation. However, it is up to you to judge its use according to the evolution of the situation.*²³³

For a certain number of Parisian advisors, this operation is only possible because of the privileged relationship between the French and Rwandan military forces - without looking too closely. Thus Patrick Lecointre, head of Edouard Balladur's military cabinet, noted on April 9 that "the city of Kigali is held by the FAR and the Presidential Guard, with whom we have very good relations through our military cooperants. The evacuation operation will therefore be able to take place under satisfactory conditions as soon as our additional elements are in place."²³⁴

The question of evacuating French nationals was raised very early by Paris, even though the first reports of the unrest coming back to the capital did not identify the French as potential targets.²³⁵ On Thursday, 7 April, Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin gave orders to French nationals in Ruhengeri and Gisenyi to evacuate their towns by road to Gitarama or Goma.²³⁶ On 8 April, the same officer was instructed - as already noted - by General Mercier to take the necessary measures to organize an evacuation: in particular, he was informed that "a French element of the EFAO²³⁷ will be set up in Kigali tomorrow, 9 April, at dawn or earlier if possible." General Mercier also asked him to inform the Rwandan authorities, in particular concerning "free access to Kigali airport," to communicate these elements to the French ambassador, and to inform UNAMIR and the RPF "as soon as our planes land."²³⁸

By noon, the ambassador in Kigali received a request from the Quai d'Orsay to "firmly" advise French nationals living in the capital to "leave the country."²³⁹ Despite the danger, some French nationals did not wish to be repatriated for various reasons - they were often members of the clergy.²⁴⁰

The first of the “extractions” of French nationals by an Amaryllis unit was launched on the morning of 9 April. These evacuation operations were carried out by specialized detachments in convoys of four or five civilian vehicles - cars or trucks - driven at high speed and guided by a pair of AMT cooperants through the complex road network of Kigali.²⁴¹ Around 4 p.m., the first 44 French evacuees were taken to Kigali airport and took off at 5:30 p.m. on a C-160 bound for Bangui. The next day, Colonel Lasserre, deputy head of the Prime Minister’s military cabinet, described the evacuation operation as follows: “[It] is currently being carried out with the agreement of the FAR, who are holding the town and with whom we are negotiating. The requisitioned civilian vehicles are being used for movement, as we have no military vehicles on site. This type of action, led by the ambassador, should be able to continue throughout the day and lead to the evacuation of the vast majority of our compatriots. If the situation deteriorated in Kigali, we would have to consider the use of force.”

Colonel Lasserre added that “the arrival of the Belgians, who are encountering the hostility of the FAR, who are holding the city, could tip the situation over. We are therefore trying to advance our national operation as quickly as possible before the situation deteriorates.”²⁴² On Sunday 10 April, eight C-130s and three Transall C-160s evacuated 280 French nationals to Bujumbura (Burundi) and Bangui.²⁴³ From that date onwards, there were fewer French evacuations and the extractions carried out by the Amaryllis soldiers became increasingly difficult: on Monday 11 April, two convoys were fired upon by automatic weapons, leading to a response from the French soldiers.²⁴⁴

However, in a report dated 11 April, a DGSE analysis showed that the RPF had undertaken not to hinder the evacuation operations of Western nationals; but it was concerned about the attitude of the FAR, which was likely to hinder “the smooth running of the evacuation operations if the French troops were to leave the airport.”²⁴⁵

By 12 noon on Wednesday, 13 April, the majority of French evacuations had been carried out by Amaryllis forces. 576 French nationals had been evacuated from Rwanda: 121 by road, and 455 by air - the majority of the latter to Bujumbura (383) and Bangui (183).

Only 43 of them were transported directly to Paris. As for the Western nationals evacuated by the French Amaryllis forces, they were mainly Belgians, Germans and Americans. 256 were evacuated on the first day by road, and only 96 of them accompanied the French nationals on the following three days as they were evacuated from Rwanda by air.²⁴⁶ As Colonel Lasserre points out, Amaryllis was indeed a “national operation.”

The evacuation of Rwandans: the obsession with the “Habyarimana family” and the problematic “embassy staff”

From the outset, the evacuation of threatened Rwandans was not a priority for the French authorities supervising Operation Amaryllis. Not envisaged in the initial intentions of the French intervention, the fate of these highly endangered people - and in particular the Tutsi - was only really raised once the evacuation of the French nationals had been completed. One exception, but a notable one: the protection and evacuation of the widow of Juvénal Habyarimana and her family. This was an original and personal request made by François Mitterrand,²⁴⁷ and it is an issue that is constantly mentioned in the archives of Operation Amaryllis.

On the morning of 7 April, the family of the deceased president asked Ambassador Marlaud to “be evacuated urgently” from Rwanda,²⁴⁸ and the next morning they made the same request.²⁴⁹ Even before the official launch of Operation Amaryllis, French diplomats considered the conditions for this rather unusual evacuation: “We could also evacuate members of President Habyarimana’s immediate family in this first rotation, on the understanding that their number would remain a minority in relation to that of French and foreign nationals, and in any case would not exceed 10 people.”²⁵⁰ An anonymous handwritten memo from a military official specifies the conditions of this air transport, so that “the relatives would not leave alone” and that “a white core” would be formed around them.²⁵¹ Does this wish that the Habyarimana family be mixed with French passengers aim to make this evacuation more discreet and acceptable? Perhaps, in the mind of this military official, it is also a question of ensuring the safety of these particular passengers by surrounding

them with French nationals whom the RPF will be very reluctant to attack.

On 9 April, at 1:01 p.m., the DAM confirmed to the ambassador that President Habyarimana's very close family would be taken "on the first rotations with French nationals under the conditions already specified." At 4 p.m., an AMT team accompanied the convoy carrying Agathe Habyarimana and her family from her residence to the Kigali airport with the escort of a Presidential Guard detachment.²⁵² The twelve members of the Habyarimana family boarded the first C-160 with 44 other French passengers, which took off at 6:15 p.m. for Bangui. In the evening, Ambassador Marlaud sent a precise list of the Rwandans who had been evacuated²⁵³ and the next day asked about the fate of the "large family" still in the presidential residence - still under the protection of the Presidential Guard.²⁵⁴ The Department, under the signature of Jean-Marc de La Sablière, gave its "agreement to evacuate, at the end of the operation, the members of President Habyarimana's family (in the broad sense) who were still in the Kanombe residence."²⁵⁵ Before that, it was clearly stated that "as long as the operation to remove French nationals and other foreign communities was underway in Kigali, it was desirable that the family [already evacuated] of President Habyarimana remain in Bangui."²⁵⁶ Reading the numerous memos concerning the family of the deceased president, it is clear that the issue is causing some discomfort among French actors.

Three days after the evacuation of the widow Habyarimana and her relatives, in preparation for the next day's core cabinet meeting, Dominique Pin and General Quesnot told François Mitterrand that "the close family of the Rwandan president has been evacuated, according to your directives. His relatives, about a hundred people, have fled to the north-west, probably to Zaire, given the personal links between Marshal Mobutu and President Habyarimana."²⁵⁷ During the 13 April core cabinet meeting, it was Foreign Minister Alain Juppé who drew the attention of the President of the Republic to the fate of Agathe Habyarimana: "President Habyarimana's close family is currently in the Central African Republic. Now Patassé [²⁵⁸] wants to get rid of them. There are two solutions: Zaire or France. The President of the Republic replied, without any detours, that "if they want to come to France, France will naturally welcome them."²⁵⁹

The same day, the French embassy in Bangui announced the arrival of the family of the deceased president on 17 April, and informed the Department of Agathe Habyarimana's wishes, particularly with regard to accommodation:

*The Habyarimana family has no possibility of accommodation with relatives in Paris and would be grateful if the French authorities would welcome them and provide them with accommodation (the President's wife has asked me to give her, as soon as possible, details of the place and nature - apartment, house or hotel - of the accommodation. She would like to have a telephone.*²⁶⁰

On 16 April, in a memo he sent to the Prime Minister, the Minister for Cooperation, Michel Roussin, specified the practical details of this reception: "During the last core cabinet meeting, the President of the Republic asked that this family be received in France. Arrangements have been made for them to board a flight on Sunday afternoon, 17 April. The airline tickets were paid for by the Ministry of Cooperation."²⁶¹

The minister explained that an interministerial meeting held on 15 April at Matignon provided for "accommodation for this family in a medium-category Parisian hotel for a period not exceeding three months. The Protocol Department was responsible for finding the hotel and taking the family there." Michel Roussin raised the problem of the "cost of the operation [...] estimated at about 250,000 francs":

*Neither the Ministry of Foreign Affairs nor the Ministry of Cooperation has the budgetary possibilities to meet this expense. Under these conditions, one solution could be to solicit the DGSE, which has often intervened in the past in matters of this nature. If the Prime Minister approves such a formula, I would be grateful if he would give the necessary instructions.*²⁶²

In the margin of the document, a handwritten entry by the minister's cabinet director, Jean-Marc Simon, states that "Mr. Bazi [illegible] whom I had on the inter agreed to take charge of the 250,000 F."²⁶³

After the priority care given to the close family of Juvénal Habyarimana, the last evacuations of Operation Amaryllis responded to a political request to remove from the country a whole group of Rwandan personalities linked to the deceased president, in particular those whom the Ministry of Defense designated to Colonel Poncet as the "president's relatives."²⁶⁴ This general expression allows the

group to be expanded and at the same time justifies similar treatment for people linked to the president's widow, who was evacuated on 9 April. On Monday, 11 April, with the evacuation of the French nationals practically complete, the general staff decided that "it is now appropriate to evacuate the 70 people of the family."²⁶⁵ In the evening, a COMOPS²⁶⁶ unit undertook a recovery mission for these relatives of Habyarimana in order to extract them as quickly as possible. Among them were prominent members of the "Zero Network" such as Protas Zigihanyerazo and Alphonse Ntirivamunda. However, the French military's search was in vain, the residence in Kanombe was completely empty. The French command suggested that "the relatives had left Kigali to return to their region of origin near Gisenyi."²⁶⁷

For the first time on 10 April, Ambassador Jean-Michel Marlaud, in the continuity of his exchanges on the "relatives," mentioned the fate of the Rwandan opposition, who had taken refuge in the French embassy. He recommended that "in the event that the embassy is closed, and if circumstances allow, I think it would be desirable to transport them (separately from French nationals) to the airport, for departure to the extent possible."²⁶⁸ The Department laconically gave its agreement, without further development.²⁶⁹

That same Sunday, a large-scale extraction was organized for the first major evacuation of Rwandan civilians. The ambassador testifies as follows: "A section of the 3rd RPIMa accompanied by two technical soldiers, intervened at 4:30 p.m. at the Sainte-Agathe orphanage in Masaka to clear the orphanage. Using dump trucks to go faster in order to arrive before nightfall, they took them directly to the airport to board their flight to Bangui. Their total number is 97 children and 23 adults."²⁷⁰ Some later questions about the identity of these orphans and especially of their numerous companions somewhat tarnish the significance of this rare rescue of the local civilian population.²⁷¹

On 11 April, a diplomatic telegram mentions for the first time the evacuation of Rwandans working for French interests: "In the event that Rwandan nationals linked to France, and in particular those working for French companies, express the wish to leave with the resources of the French forces, you can

give your agreement under the conditions laid down for Rwandans who have taken refuge in the embassy.”²⁷² A certain number of telegrams seem to have been exchanged with Ambassador Marlaud. They give rise to gradual instructions from the Quai d’Orsay, which undoubtedly testify to discussions or negotiations between the Embassy and the Department in Paris. At first, the Director of Human Resources at the Quai d’Orsay only mentioned the payment of two months’ salary to the Embassy’s Rwandan staff.²⁷³ At 5:05 p.m., the DAM, under the signature of Catherine Boivineau, stated tersely that “you are authorized to use our system to send away local Embassy personnel who wish to leave Rwanda;”²⁷⁴ half an hour later, her superior, Jean-Marc de La Sablière, stated more forcefully that “the Department confirms that Rwandan nationals who are part of the Embassy’s staff (local recruits), who can be reached, should be offered the possibility of leaving Kigali.”²⁷⁵ An order addressed to the military forces of Amaryllis repeated this provision on Monday evening, the 11th: “Considering that the withdrawal of our compatriots, with the exception of those of the diplomatic mission, has been completed, accelerate the evacuation of foreign nationals and embassy personnel.”²⁷⁶ A memo from Colonel Lasserre addressed to Édouard Balladur mentioned just before that “270 Rwandans (government officials and personnel in the service of the French) have taken refuge in the embassy and are asking for our protection.”²⁷⁷ It should be noted that during these numerous exchanges, the particular fate of the Tutsi - and the protection that this could or should have generated - was never mentioned or envisaged by the French authorities, either in Kigali or in Paris. On Wednesday, 12 April, 339 Rwandans were evacuated by military air, mostly to Burundi, by the Amaryllis forces.²⁷⁸ However, it is not possible to distinguish between “embassy personnel” and figures who had taken refuge in the embassy; people in real danger of death and those taking precautions. An undated memo that recounts a meeting with Consul Bunel nevertheless states that “of the 16 agents employed (all Rwandans) only one [...] was able to be taken to the airport and evacuated [...]. The other local recruits (mostly Tutsi), of whom there is no news, may have been killed.”²⁷⁹

The official report of the Armed Forces staff on 14 April states that 1,238

people were evacuated by air, including 454 French and 784 foreigners, 612 of whom were Africans, 394 of whom were Rwandans.²⁸⁰ Despite the lists of names kept in the archives, it is still very difficult today to discern precisely who were Tutsi, or who were really in danger.

4.3.3.3 A RAPID AND TOTAL DISENGAGEMENT OF THE FRENCH AUTHORITIES AND FORCES

Closure and evacuation of the French embassy

“Radio Uganda has just announced (1:15 p.m. local time, 12:15 p.m. in Paris) that Paul Kagame has rejected the new government in Kigali and ordered his troops to march on the capital to overthrow this government.”²⁸¹

It was undoubtedly this news, when the French soldiers had barely set foot on Rwandan soil, that immediately shortened the time frame of Operation Amaryllis, and gave it the emergency character that characterized its five days. This fear of infiltration or even of the arrival of RPA troops in Kigali, of their joining forces with the CND battalion, quickly made the French authorities fear the worst - even though the worst of the massacres is taking place around them. As early as 9 April, the Prime Minister’s advisor made this handwritten comment to him: “It will be in our interest to move quickly and to withdraw as soon as the evacuation is over: the RPF is hostile to us and its probable arrival will put us in difficulty.”²⁸² The situation report that Dominique Pin and General Quesnot sent to François Mitterrand two days later was along the same lines: “On the military level, the situation is very worrying. In Kigali, the fighting with heavy weapons and the massacres are continuing. The RPF is increasing its pressure on the capital. It has succeeded in infiltrating 400 men about ten kilometers from Kigali, could quickly threaten the security of the airport and control part of the access routes.”²⁸³ Further on, the analysis is even more explicit about France’s very uncomfortable position: “On the ground, we are perceived as allies of the Hutus and supporters of former President Habyarimana. The entry of the RPF into Kigali and the fighting that is about to escalate represent a very serious threat to the security of our diplomatic agents.”²⁸⁴

The French ambassador, on the other hand, always seems to be caught up in negotiations and risky political manoeuvres. After a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the new interim government, he admittedly stated that the RPF had attacked on three fronts and had succeeded in putting the FAR in difficulty in the Mutara. But he added that the FAR “asked us to ensure security in Kigali” in order to send more men into battle; and because, according to his interlocutor, “the gendarmerie has managed to significantly reduce the level of massacres and looting.”²⁸⁵ This last assertion is not accompanied by any comment from the French representative, even though all the testimonies concur on the intensification and extension of mass killings at that time - sometimes even committed with the complicity of the Rwandan gendarmerie. In view of this worrying military situation, an interministerial meeting was held in Paris on the morning of 11 April. It suggested the advanced withdrawal of military troops and the “possible closure of the embassy.” At 3:19 p.m. the ambassador proposed, in view of the worsening situation in Kigali, that the embassy be closed. An hour later, extremely urgent and under secret-defense encryption, Jean-Michel Marlaud “wishes to be authorized to proceed with the closure of the embassy, if necessary this evening.”²⁸⁶ The response from the Quai d’Orsay arrived 22 minutes later:

*In view of the risks that would weigh on the embassy staff in the event of the RPF arriving in force in Kigali and the fighting that would accompany it, the department has decided to close the embassy. Please make arrangements for our compatriots who have reached the airport, yourself and all of your remaining staff to leave the city as soon as possible, along with the last military unit currently there, and reach the airport. In principle, you will take the last French military plane leaving Kigali.*²⁸⁷

In the end, Jean-Michel Marlaud did not wait for this symbolic deadline, and had a pile of diplomatic archives burned in the gardens of the embassy - with the help of a soldier from the 1st RPIMa.²⁸⁸ The next day at 5:45 a.m., the ambassador and the entire diplomatic corps were evacuated from the French embassy and transported by an Amaryllis escort to Kanombe airport. Several convoys were

necessary: the first two were reserved for the embassy personnel and sensitive material. The next two were for the evacuation of “political opponents” who had taken refuge in the premises of the French Embassy. All these people took off on two C160s for Bangui at 8 a.m.²⁸⁹, along with the consul William Bunel’s big dog.²⁹⁰

A hasty? departure of the French armed forces

On 11 April, Rear Admiral Lecointre, head of the Prime Minister’s military cabinet, gave a broad overview of the withdrawal of military forces from Operation Amaryllis. He reviews the risks involved in this decision, which is marked by the urgency of a radical disengagement that brings together many of the contradictions of French policy in Rwanda over the years:

Tomorrow morning we should have completed the search operations for our last nationals. We will then be able to begin the withdrawal of our forces and the last elements of our embassy. This operation will be delicate, because the Rwandan armed forces hope that we will help them against the RPF. They may therefore try to oppose our departure. We will have to obtain the support of UNAMIR and the Belgians. If Boutros-Ghali asks for the evacuation of UNAMIR, the situation will be complicated: it will be difficult for us to refuse our assistance because this UN force was set up at our insistence. The media management of the operation will have to be carefully prepared, because there will be no brakes on the civil war that will be unleashed with its trail of atrocities.²⁹¹

On the same day, 11 April, the Parisian General Staff approved the proposals made by Colonel Poncet for the withdrawal of French forces from Rwanda, which had come in the framework of Operation Amaryllis: he suggested, however, that

the uncertainty that remained concerning three of our compatriots, the possibility that some of them had not been able to escape, and our cooperation with the Belgians, meant that it was necessary to maintain a small detachment capable of autonomous action in a hostile environment. Consequently, the specialized detachment will remain on the Kigali platform after the departure of your units. It will be supplemented by a few cooperants (5 maximum) because of their knowledge of the environment. I would like to point out that this last decision has the agreement of the Minister of Cooperation. The whole unit will be entrusted to Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin, who will then report to the operational command of the CEMA [...] The missions will subsequently be assigned to Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin.²⁹²

In a memo addressed to the Prime Minister, Colonel Lasserre offers a very specific analysis of the conditions of this “disengagement operation,” which in itself summarizes a number of representations - somewhat tinged with cynicism - that are current in Parisian circles:

This operation, which could take place tomorrow, must be brutal to escape the perverse effects of local antagonisms. Indeed: the FAR, who hold the city, want us to stay and fear that our departure, and in particular the closing of the embassy, would constitute a “green light” for the RPF to attack the capital. The ability of the RPF to enter Kigali has not been demonstrated, however, and the question remains as to whether the current restraint stems from a desire to let us carry out our evacuation operation, or from its failure with the resistance of the FAR [...] In the event of the RPF submerging the capital, we will have protected all our compatriots from Tutsi reactions, which could be fatal for them. If the FAR continue to hold the city, we can no longer be accused of complicity with the Hutu, as has often been the case in the past, even though their abuses have multiplied over the past three days.²⁹³

In accordance with the plan, Colonel Poncet reported the next day on the progress of this disengagement, which was behind schedule.²⁹⁴ Moreover, in the message from General Mercier to Colonel Poncet on 11 April, it is noted that a specialized detachment under the direct orders of Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin was to be maintained.²⁹⁵ This group was a composite one, since, placed under the command of the deputy Defense attaché, it was to mix cooperants and military personnel who had recently arrived in Rwanda as part of Operation Amaryllis.²⁹⁶ The mission entrusted to it remains, as already noted, ill-defined.²⁹⁷ It was to continue the search for the bodies of the missing cooperant gendarmes, but also to find any French nationals who had not been evacuated; moreover, to maintain a French presence while the Belgians were still there. This mission was entrusted to the Special Forces detachment, which had arrived from Bayonne during Amaryllis, and one of its military cadres, who had been on mission in Rwanda for a long time, was assigned the task of managing the possible extraction of French nationals. It is true that Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin is the officer on the ground who knows the FAR and its military hierarchy best, since he was, in fact, the advisor to their staff. This choice, which had its logic, was subsequently discussed

informally on 14 April by Lieutenant-Colonel Balch, who wrote to his regiment that the exfiltration mission was already well accomplished and that it should not get bogged down in Kigali.²⁹⁸

After several days of interrogation, intelligence from the DGSE indicated that “The bodies of a couple were formally observed (with binoculars today) in a garden in the center of Kigali (villa 15?). There is a strong presumption that this is the couple Adjudant-Chief Didot. There is nothing concerning Chief Warrant Officer Maier.”²⁹⁹ The discovery of the three bodies of the French cooperants - that of Maier was found shortly afterwards - and the information that arrived from the field³⁰⁰ ended up convincing the Armed Forces staff that the military and political situation in Kigali had changed radically. The latter noted in particular the importance of the RPF military presence around the Rwandan capital.³⁰¹

An interview with Colonel Henri Poncet was filmed by the ECPA team on the morning of 12 April. In spite of the things that were not said and the language used, the meeting is revealing of the atmosphere of general rescue that reigned at that moment in Kigali under the pressure of the arrival of the RPF:

Q: Colonel, what is the situation this morning?

A: I think you can see around the hills of Kigali that some elements of the RPF are taking position. Are these light detachments or larger forces? I am unable to say at this time.

Q: It seems that everyone is leaving. The ambassador left this morning, that's the chronicle of a departure before the war, right?

A: I can't answer that. It's true, the ambassador left Kigali this morning around 7:30 a.m. and the embassy is now empty of anyone. We burned the archives of course before leaving. The withdrawal of the French units in town is underway now and I will probably have everyone back at the airport by the end of the morning.

Q: So the departure is imminent?

A: I didn't say that the departure is imminent. I said that the evacuation phase of the French nationals was over. We have evacuated in these three days, 400, nearly 400 French nationals, and about 600 foreign nationals.

Q: What could make you stay here?

A: Orders! (he smiles a little sarcastically).

Q: And maybe support the Belgian soldiers or other military personnel to go and recover their own nationals, or is that all over?

A: For the moment I have no further orders.

Q: What did the ambassador say to you this morning before leaving?

A: Goodbye and thank you!

Q: Is that all?

A: Yes!

Q: Thank you. (the colonel turns his head and leaves the field with a wry smile on his lips).³⁰²

The information acquired by the special forces translates into a message from Paris to the last French forces in Kigali: “Since this morning, the balance of forces has been upset in favor of the RPF, which holds mainly the northern suburbs of the city and has managed to infiltrate south of the Kanombe airfield. The government troops have retreated into the city, but are present at the airfield, which is practically surrounded. The RPF continued to push south, particularly in the Ruhengeri and Rulindo sectors. The order was therefore given to evacuate the last units of the specialized forces.³⁰³

It is likely that it was the observed collapse of the FAR, which turned out to be much less catastrophic and rapid than announced, that prompted the French army to review its position on the ground and to request the evacuation of the last parachute marine infantry company. On 13 April, General Mercier sent personal and secret instructions to Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin to organize the departure of the last elements of the specialized detachment.³⁰⁴ Nevertheless, it can be seen that the French general staff wanted to keep at its disposal, at the Kigali airport, residual but real means of specific action, even though the objective of Operation Amaryllis had already been explicitly achieved. General Mercier wrote:

I have therefore decided, despite the withdrawal of our forces, planned for 12 and 13 April, to temporarily extend a specialized detachment on site, with the triple aim of obtaining information on the situation and on missing persons, and of extracting nationals as far as possible [...]. You will maintain with three or four personnel taken from our entire detachment, a means of communication with the EMA and you will leave Rwanda with an aircraft of the Belgian detachment today, 14 April, whenever possible.³⁰⁵

The preservation of an exfiltration capability for missing nationals appears to be the only argument given by the

French command to keep the men of the 1st RPIMa on site. In fact, the instruction requiring the maintenance of a ground exfiltration capability only makes sense in the case where French air assets have been withdrawn from Kigali. Moreover, the order clearly underlines that the means of evacuation from Rwanda that the general staff favors is the Belgian air force. At this stage, the French command wished to keep a team whose reduced size no longer allowed for any large-scale action, even the extraction of nationals, but only possible through negotiation. The future of Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin's team, however, seemed to be quickly compromised as Colonel Poncet was asked to withdraw his forces. Thus, on 13 April, in the middle of the day, the staff announced to the commander of Amaryllis that he could withdraw with his men, while letting him know that the specialized team would not have to stay much longer in Kigali:

*In accordance with conduct order #4 you are authorized right now to disengage with the last company of the detachment and the last half of the EMT. The specialized detachment reinforced with the three AMT personnel will remain in Kigali after your departure, under the orders of Lieutenant Colonel Maurin, at least until the morning of 14 April. It is up to you to choose the moment of your withdrawal according to the evolution of the situation in the afternoon or evening of 13 April, 1994.*³⁰⁶

The commander of the 1st RPIMa detachment, who leads most of the specialized detachment, Lieutenant Colonel Balch, described in two faxes sent to his regiment in Bayonne the conditions of its disengagement. He mentions a team of three or four men left behind with the Belgian forces: "To sum up, we (and the plane) have become the symbol of France and the FAR do not want us to let them down."³⁰⁷ Continuing his reflection, he directly questions the logic of the mission by pointing out, in a postscript, a discrepancy between the mission entrusted by Paris, namely, to leave a small team on site in case of need, and the reality of what it is possible to do:

We are thus living an interesting "textbook case" but which does not have for the moment a solution worthy of the name. Our mission was to extract the nationals, and this was done - and done very well - by all the guys in the detachment. A unit like ours should never be given a mission where it risks getting bogged down as it did. We had to leave right away once the job was done (I didn't like the idea of staying

*near the Belgians as a presence and I said so [...]. PS: I am not sure that Paris is aware of the problem.*³⁰⁸

On the morning of 14 April, the order for the departure of the last French soldiers arrived in Kigali: “First, you will leave Kigali with your entire detachment before 12:00. Secondly, you will inform the Belgian authorities.”³⁰⁹ The operation was delayed because of several mortar attacks aimed at the French plane, with the clear intention of preventing it from taking off. The C-130 had to wait until nightfall to slip discreetly into the flow of traffic on the ground and take off with the entire last detachment of Amaryllis for Bangui.³¹⁰ Lieutenant-Colonel Balch’s analysis of the incident is accurate, because the mortar attack on the French plane at Kigali airport attests to the desire of one of the parties involved not to see the French leave.³¹¹ However, he was careful not to put forward a clear-cut hypothesis as to who fired the shots. The journalist from *Le Figaro*, Renaud Girard, who witnessed the scene while he was on the spot with the Belgian forces, was much better informed in an article published on 17 April. He sheds light on the very ambiguous relationship between the French and Rwandan military authorities until the end:

8:50 a.m. on Thursday. The order arrived. The French were loading their Hercules on their way to the Central African Republic. Suddenly, explosions. Three mortar shells, perfectly aligned, fell on the runway, 200 meters from the French jumbo jet. RPF fire? Not likely: these fine gunners would not have missed the plane. What then?

We are going to observe the impact: the shot comes from the east. From the Kanombe base. A French officer: “The FAR like us. But now they like us too much....”

*10 h 50. The engines of the Hercules are running. Explosions. Two impacts, practically in the same place. The signal is clear: the FAR do not want their “allies” to leave. 3 p.m.: I met the commander of the Kanombe battalion, who was immediately “taken in charge” by Colonel Roman. Did he explain to him that he had to be reasonable? In any case, without warning, the Hercules took off, entered the runway, and took off immediately, releasing a fireworks display of anti-missile decoys behind it.*³¹²

The conditions of the departure of the last French plane from Kigali in April 1994 were therefore, to say the least, bizarre. As a sign of the extreme confusion that reigned, the head of the crisis unit monitoring the operation

at the Armed Forces headquarters in Paris asked: “Is Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin on board?”³¹³ This question, which was ultimately irrelevant since the officer was indeed present when the plane arrived in Bangui and then in Paris, attests to the indecision that persisted until the last minute in both Kigali and Paris as to whether it was appropriate to keep a small team on site under the command of a French officer.

An isolated message, dated 22 April, summarizes the situation in Rwanda after the departure of the foreign nationals:

*The killing of Rwandan civilians and fighting in Kigali and the north, continues as foreign forces completed evacuation operations for expatriates on Friday. Militarily, the RPF's push south and into the capital has not let up, sometimes at the expense of Hutu civilians. The determination of the RPF is all the greater because the FAR, the Presidential Guard and Hutu militias, with the help of the population, are massacring many Tutsi in the capital but also in the provinces, as for example in Gikoro, where 1,850 Tutsi have been killed this week.*³¹⁴

4.3.4 *The persistent blindness of the French authorities to the outbreak of genocidal massacres*

4.3.4.1 GENOCIDAL MASSACRES CONCEALED

Dominated by the announcement of the attack on the presidential plane, the news about the first massacres of Tutsi committed in Kigali by the Presidential Guard was only briefly reported to Paris. On the morning of 7 April, Ambassador Marlaud reported to Paris on the outbreak of violence in Kigali, precisely identifying the perpetrators: “Since this morning, armed units, in particular from the Presidential Guard, have been making arrests, conducting kidnappings and, without doubt, murders.”³¹⁵ He emphasizes their political dimension and, to a lesser extent, mentions their community targeting: “Beyond the political leaders of the opposition, the raids extend to all Tutsi. [...] The Presidential Guard circulates in the city and attacks Tutsi homes. No authority seems to be able to intervene for the moment, either because they cannot be contacted or because they admit their powerlessness.”³¹⁶

In a diplomatic telegram that came a little later, and which was solely concerned with the fate of French and Western nationals, the French ambassador, in the course of a sentence, put his finger on the essence

of the massacres that were being unleashed in Kigali: “In two cases, Rwandan soldiers entered houses inhabited by foreigners, looking for Rwandans. In addition to the case already mentioned in the French village, a member of the European delegation who was sheltering four people (three adults, one child, all Tutsi) had his home invaded by soldiers. He himself was unharmed, but the four Rwandans were killed.”³¹⁷

On the same day, the defense attaché, Colonel Cussac, also reported on the massacres that had begun in Kigali, associating the massacres of political opponents with those of the Tutsi: “On the other hand, from daybreak, patrols of the Presidential Guard began to methodically crisscross all the neighborhoods of Kyovu [*sic*], Kimihurua, Gikondo and Remera in search of opposition politicians and Rwandans of Tutsi ethnicity in order to eliminate them.”³¹⁸

A particular DGSE memo, widely circulated on 8 April, shows what the political priorities and weaknesses of perception of the authorities may still be in their analysis of the Rwandan situation: “For the time being, since the Tutsi are relatively far removed from the clashes, the main thing seems to be to contain the crisis, so that it does not serve as a detonator for new murderous Tutsi-Hutu clashes. In the event of a new outbreak of inter-ethnic violence in Rwanda, the clashes would have a high probability of spreading to Burundi.”³¹⁹

In the days that followed, several reports mentioned the extension of the massacres outside Kigali: “While Rwandan forces continued to kill many civilians in Kigali, the abuses extended to certain sectors of the provinces, in the northwest in the region of Gisenyi, but also in the south of the country.”³²⁰ The French authorities seemed to be largely unaware of the extension and systematization of the genocidal massacres which, in the space of just a few days, affected most of the country’s prefectures. Indeed, French officials read the events through the prism of past violence, perceived as traditional, even customary. It is known in French diplomatic and military circles that the Rwandan army is accustomed to looting and killing civilians. The use of the generic term “abuses,” abundantly used in military and diplomatic reports, is quite

revealing from this point of view. However, it tends to minimize or even obscure the massacres and, in particular, their organized and premeditated nature. On 8 April, the defense attaché thus briefly noted that “inside, unconfirmed information mentions massacres committed in Mutura (20 km from Gisenyi) against the Tutsi population.”³²¹

As for the large-scale massacres of Tutsi in the capital Kigali, they remained largely ignored or underestimated: on the evening of 9 April, it was still believed that “the situation was confused in Kigali, whose outlying districts were still being subjected to abuses by uncontrolled armed gangs, while the fighting between the Presidential Guard and the RPF battalion on the axis linking the city to the airport continued.”³²²

This confusion over the identification of the actors and victims of the massacres also seems to be shared by the soldiers of Operation Amaryllis, who were quickly confronted in their evacuation operations with scenes of mass murder of civilians. On 10 April, a filmed ECPA meeting with a non-commissioned officer from Operation Amaryllis shows this lack of understanding of events, which is still fueled by the prevalence of anti-RPF rhetoric:

Q: How many missions have you carried out to recover foreign nationals?

A: So far, I have carried out about ten missions to recover French and European nationals, which have gone well.

Q: You evacuate them to the airport?

A: So, we evacuate them. First we pick them up, and we bring them back either to the embassy or directly to the French school, and we transport them in convoys of several dozen vehicles to the airport where they are taken care of by an evacuation center there.

Q: The high-risk zones in Kigali?

A: The high-risk zones, well, that's mostly in the city center, the shopping mall that was looted, plus some popular areas where there have been abuses committed in the last few days, but we haven't set foot there too much. There is also the Meridien Hotel, which was targeted by the rebels. Well, we are sometimes obliged to go there because we have to get the nationals back, but we are careful.

Q: Have you seen any rebels?

A: We saw rebels... In fact, it's rather peculiar because, well, there are armed rebels who blend in a little with the population and there are groups of rebels armed with machetes and grenades who... Well, we came across several of them, yes, but in general they applaud the French as well. So

we can't really know who does what. But we do know that it's the same people who commit actions in the city center.

Q: And a priori, how many days do you plan to stay here?

A: Well, for the moment I couldn't tell you. The first step is to repatriate all the French, and that's just about to be done. Then we'll deal with the European nationals and then we'll see.

Q: Thank you!"⁸²³

For his part, Colonel Cussac indicated that the RPF “seems to be carrying out a generalized attack,” adding, however, that “this information was communicated to us by the FAR headquarters, but the information is still too confused to be used. The Gisenyi sector is calm, according to the sector chief with whom the post has direct contact. The internal situation: abuses by armed groups accompanied by machete-wielding gangs continue in the neighborhoods.”³²⁴ It should be noted that the “abuses” mentioned in this report have identified perpetrators, but that the victims remain anonymous.³²⁵

Military intelligence memos that “the massacres of civilians in the capital, in addition to the ongoing fighting, have resulted in several hundred victims of both ethnic groups, while in the southwest of the country there are reports of executions of opponents carried out yesterday by pro-government militias in the Cyangugu region.”³²⁶ In this message, the Tutsi residing in the capital become unidentified “civilians” and the victims are “of both ethnic groups.” The following day’s memo is just as remarkable in its formulation, which is biased to say the least. It announces “that the inter-ethnic settlements of accounts are continuing,” and ends with a remarkable tirade in the register of fallacious discourse: “Left to the probable abuses of the defeated FAR units and the victorious RPF units, the Rwandan populations, Hutu and Tutsi, are likely to increase the flow of refugees already on their way to Zaire, Tanzania or Burundi.”³²⁷ This type of communication probably expresses a way of thinking about the situation that was dominant in Paris at the time, to the point of distorting the facts, of equating the Tutsi victims, massacred *en masse*, with the Hutu populations that were fleeing from the RPF advance.

4.3.4.2 A new perception of the drama imposed by the media coverage of Amaryllis

Operation Amaryllis, and especially the testimonies of French and Western nationals evacuated from Rwanda, aroused both a much greater interest in French public opinion in the Rwandan tragedy, and a much more sensitive embodiment of the atrocities that had been taking place since the morning of 7 April. As early as 10 April, the ECPA team, very limited in its space and filming possibilities, filmed the evacuation of the 97 orphans from Masaka at Kanombe airport, which, as we have seen, received a great deal of media attention from the French political and military authorities.³²⁸ In a vain attempt to contact these children, who spoke only Kinyarwanda, the film crew set its sights on a young Belgian priest who seemed to know these orphans well and communicated with them in their language. He gives a testimony, far removed from the circumstances of the evacuation of these orphans.

Q: Where were you?

A: I was in the parish, let's say 5 kilometers from here, the parish of Masaka.

Q: Okay. How long have you been in Rwanda?

A: Eleven years.

Q: Eleven years!?

A: Eleven years, yes!

Q: And this is not the first time that there has been unrest in this country...

A: That is to say, it is not the first time, but for me it is the first time because for the first attack I was in Europe.

Q: So this is the first time you've evacuated?

A: Yes, it's the first time, but it was very, very heated situation! On Friday [8 April] we didn't sleep all night because people started coming to the parish. So we opened the school, we opened the catechism school to hide people. There were thousands and thousands. It was Thursday [7 April], they came. So they stayed there and on Friday the assassins came to the parish around 10 o'clock. I was there before, around 8 a.m., with Father François, I was at the nuns' house to celebrate mass. We met some people there with sticks, knives, all that, who started to enter the dispensary and I begged them: "You must be calm, why are you killing these people? (his face is more and more marked and livid as he recalls the events). They said, "It was the Tutsi who killed the president!"

But anyway they left. We went back to the house and I found a municipal policeman with the hat and uniform and all that. And I said, "We have to help there at the dispensary, because they are attacking the dispensary!" They

left. Again I found other soldiers, also from the municipal police and I said: "and where are you from?" They say that they are ? (unintelligible word), that's the formula here. So I said, "we have to help! "So..."
[The priest is challenged by someone behind him and the interview and filming are abruptly stopped].³²⁹

Colonel Poncet, in his account of Operation Amaryllis, highlights this media pressure that was felt on the Rwandan ground from 10 April onwards: "The media were very present from the second day of the operation. COMOPS facilitated their work by giving them two daily press briefings and by helping them with their travel [...] The presence of a SIRPA cell under the orders of a COPID 330 officer,³³⁰ the commander's advisor, was greatly appreciated.³³¹ In a handwritten document reporting on the problems encountered during Operation Amaryllis, Lieutenant-Colonel Balch emphasized the incompatibility of this media presence with the instructions of discretion laid down in the operation order of 8 April: "At Kigali airport, there were dozens of journalists and photographers from the world press. This was tantamount to putting us in the limelight of a movie set, which was not really the aim."³³² In his account, Colonel Poncet is even more specific about the two main safeguards that had to be put in place to counter this omnipresent media gaze. Namely, "a permanent concern not to show them French soldiers limiting access to the assembly centers to foreigners on Rwandan territory (Directive n°008/DEF/EMA of 10 April) or not intervening to stop the massacres of which they were close witnesses."³³³

This dual desire for concealment and non-intervention by French forces raises important ethical questions for Operation Amaryllis today.

Despite the negligence - or even the efforts - of a certain number of French officials on the ground, it seems that French public opinion became aware of the reality of the massacres in Rwanda after 11 April. Initially, it was the written press that was responsible for this. Indeed, the arrival of French troops from Amaryllis and the beginning of the evacuation of French nationals led to the arrival of numerous French and international special envoys. They were not content to simply follow the

French military and humanitarian operations, but to bear witness with increasing precision to the totally unprecedented scale and nature of the Rwandan massacres. Thus, the journalists Jean Hélène for *Le Monde* and Renaud Girard for *Le Figaro* delivered increasingly well-documented reports,³³⁴ their acuity somewhat undermined the “inter-ethnic abuses” that shaped most of the official information sent to Paris.

It was the special correspondent for *Libération*, Jean-Philippe Ceppi, who went the furthest in trying to understand this “monster event” that was crystallizing in those first days of April. He did so thanks to an article entitled “Kigali delivered to the fury of Hutu killers” which appeared on 11 April in the French daily newspaper.³³⁵ A young 32-year-old Swiss reporter who had covered many African conflicts,³³⁶ he arrived in Kigali from Burundi on the night of 8 to 9 April with his colleague Jean Hélène from *Le Monde*. It was an initial meeting with Jean-Philippe Gaillard, ICRC representative in Kigali, that radically changed his reading of this new African “conflict”. Having gathered a lot of information from all over the country, the member of the International Red Cross shared with him his conviction that a genocidal event was underway. In a very short time and despite the extreme danger, the Swiss journalist conducts a particularly meticulous investigation, seeing what the French military does not see or does not want to show, and gathering more elements of intelligibility than the intelligence agents of the DGSE or the DRM could transmit. Jean-Philippe Ceppi begins his article with a precise description of the massacre in the Gikondo neighborhood: on Saturday, 9 April, five hundred Tutsi who had taken refuge in a church were murdered with grenades and bullets by four Rwandan soldiers; the survivors were killed with machetes and spiked clubs by young militiamen.

The gates of the parish of Gikondo are still ajar and bloodstains stain the gravel in front of the Catholic church. Two corpses block the entrance. Their skulls are gaping, their throats have been slashed open by a machete, and their eyes still speak of the terror of their last moments. At the bottom of the stairs, a heavy metal door, locked. Faint cries for help. Behind the door, a heap of corpses, lying in the garbage and broken glass that the looters have left behind.

The redactor continues with a synthetic analysis of great precision of the chaotic events that have bloodied Kigali since the attack on the Rwandan president:

The hunt for Tutsi and members of the opposition began as soon as the death of former president Habyarimana was announced on April 6. Armed with lists, the men of the Presidential Guard were the first to launch the bloody hunt, quickly joined by the Interabamé [sic]. House by house. Tutsi, denounced by neighbors or by the police, entire families were massacred. In case of doubt, the killers ask for the identity card where the origin is mentioned. Sometimes, only external signs of wealth, a slightly thin face and a nose with less bluntness, characteristic of the Tutsi, are enough to liquidate the unfortunate.

Jean-Philippe Ceppi concludes his paper on the military situation of the RPF, and uses a term never before used to describe the chaos that has been developing in Kigali for the past four days: “Radio contacts with the outside world suggest that they are fifteen kilometers away from the capital. But before they take over the city, if they can, the genocide of the Tutsi in Kigali will probably have taken place.”³³⁷ This is the first time since 7 April that the term “genocide” has been used in the French and international press, and appears in public debate. The journalist would use it again eight days later in a new article, dismantling with great precision the mechanisms of this “implacable machine of extermination” that he had seen set in motion in Kigali.³³⁸

On the morning of 11 April, the daily newspaper *Le Parisien* published in its “Fact of the Day” page a meeting with an RFI journalist from Rwanda, Madeleine Mukamabano. She answers in a somewhat unusual way to a recurring question about the dispute between the “Hutu (the vast majority in Rwanda) and Tutsi ethnic groups”:

What is happening in Kigali is not an ethnic conflict at all. It is true that the Presidential Guard and militias such as the Committee for the Defense of the Republic - which are 100% Hutu - are carrying out massacres against the Tutsi minority, but they are also killing Hutu political figures such as the Prime Minister and all the leaders of the opposition parties who had rallied to the idea of a government of national unity. In fact, they are killing all those who were working for the political opening of the country and for power sharing. This was an opportunity for them to eliminate all the supporters of democracy and to liquidate all the Tutsi in the process by committing a veritable genocide.³³⁹

The regional daily newspaper bars the entire middle of its page with a five-column headline: “It’s a real genocide.”

Despite these initial warnings, the denunciations of an ongoing genocide in Rwanda were not really echoed in the French and international press.³⁴⁰ Many quality reports³⁴¹ were still produced after Operation Amaryllis, but it took several weeks for the national dailies to fully acknowledge the genocidal nature of the massacres of Tutsi in Rwanda.³⁴²

However, the massacres acquired unprecedented visibility in French public opinion on that same 11 April, thanks to the 8 p.m. newscasts of the two major French national channels. Bruno Masure’s France 2 newscast opened that evening with an unusually long 5.5-minute segment on Rwanda. It is largely devoted to images and testimonies of evacuated nationals; the massacres shown - or mentioned - are always described as “inter-ethnic” and systematically associated with the entry of the RPF into Kigali.³⁴³ In the TF1 news program, presented by the journalist Dominique Bromberger, the sequence devoted to Rwanda does not open the edition. It is shorter (3.5 minutes), but gives more precise information than the France 2 news: the massacres are presented as having been taking place for 35 years between the “different ethnic groups,” but the commentary on a report emphasizes that “the Presidential Guard [is] accused of having killed Tutsi and Hutu liberals indiscriminately.”³⁴⁴ Two journalists openly worry in their comments about what will happen after the scheduled departure of French troops.³⁴⁵ This warning was heard by millions of viewers – but was hardly present in the analyses reported or made in Paris.

Each of these two television news programs opens its first filmed report with montages of almost similar images showing a machete massacre and the corpses of civilians lying on the roadsides of the Rwandan capital. Some of the images were shot that morning by the ECPA team on the outskirts of Kigali. Aboard a civilian truck that was part of a fast-moving evacuation convoy, the video operator filmed several Rwandan men loading bloody bodies

into a dump truck. An Amaryllis vehicle with the cameraman returned to the scene moments later and stopped. The dump truck and the men are gone, but the ECPA video operator films a close-up of five bodies (one man and four women, one with a severed leg) that have been dumped in a jumble in front of a ruined, half-burned house. These images of corpses, along with those of four bloody bodies in the middle of a crossroads filmed the day before,³⁴⁶ are the only ones shot by the ECPA team during the entire Amaryllis operation: they represent 35 seconds of filming out of a total of more than six hours and 50 minutes of raw footage - while many witnesses speak of hundreds of corpses scattered throughout Kigali. Can we consider this lack of desire to film these massacres as another expression of blindness on the part of the French forces during those few days in April?

It was not until 12 April that we began to hear a different discourse from the French authorities on the atrocities committed over the past several days:

The Rwandan Armed Forces, after having assassinated numerous Hutu opposition leaders, attacked the Tutsi part of the population without discrimination and with the help of young Hutus, and attacked the battalion of the Rwandan Popular Forces stationed between the capital and the airport. The latter resisted strongly against the three battalions of the FAR that were supposed to diminish it, while the RPF units moved from the 10th towards Kigali from the area where they were stationed in the north of the country, in order to lend a hand to their comrades in Kigali and to come to the aid of their fellow Tutsi who were being massacred.³⁴⁷

The progress is certainly noteworthy, but it should be noted that the Tutsi population was associated with the RPF battalion, as if the French writer were taking on board the official Rwandan discourse that equates the former with the latter, putting them in the position of traitors who should be “punished.”

In a memo dated 11 April in which it examines the circumstances of the 6 April attack, the DGSE offers another analysis of the first massacres in Rwanda. It demonstrates that the French foreign intelligence service now has a clearer understanding of the mechanisms and institutions through which the massacres were made possible and committed:

As soon as the attack was announced, on Wednesday, 6 April 1994, around 9 p.m., Radio mille collines, a Hutu extremist radio broadcasting organization close to the Coalition for the Defense of the Republic, launched calls for murder [...]. Furthermore, guided by CDR activists, armed with pre-established lists, the PG soldiers undertook to massacre all the Tutsi, as well as Hutus originating from the south or supporting the opposition parties. Most often, these liquidations spared neither women nor children.³⁴⁸

On 12 April, in preparation for his weekly meeting with the President of the Republic, François Léotard sent a general memo to the Presidency on the evolution of the situation as perceived by the Ministry of Defense. The crisis opened by the attack is presented in a very succinct manner: “After the death of the two heads of State of Rwanda and Burundi, the Rwandan tragedy led to our emergency intervention. Clashes between Hutus and Tutsi continued; RPF units surrounded the capital, which could be taken over in the next few days. The French withdrawal is underway.”³⁴⁹

4.3.4.3 FRANCE’S DEPARTURE FROM RWANDA: BETWEEN DISENGAGEMENT AND ABANDONMENT

From 11 April, the French authorities actively intervened in the media to justify the announced departure of the armed forces and a French diplomatic presence in Rwanda. Many of these official communications attempted to explain French policy before and during Operation Amaryllis, but also, in a subtle way, to justify this brutal disengagement in the midst of massacres of civilians on an unprecedented scale. In an interview with the daily *Infomation*, the Minister of Cooperation once again emphasized that “it is not a question of France intervening militarily in Rwanda” and added that “it is clear that our mission is only humanitarian in nature, aiming to repatriate our nationals.” For Michel Roussin, France’s mission from now on was to “try to put all our weight behind the factions present in order to convince them to finally find the path of reason.”³⁵⁰ Alain Juppé spoke three times publicly on 11 April on the Rwandan question, and was challenged during one of his radio meetings by a more acute question from a journalist from the Radio Africa station:

Q: Many informed observers think that the latest measures taken by France constitute a disengagement of France in this area. Aren't you afraid that these measures will leave the field open to opponents of democracy?

A: We have to understand each other. The situation in Rwanda is a tragedy that affects us deeply. France has made considerable efforts for months and months to facilitate the return of stability within the framework of the Arusha Accords. We have just recently taken measures to protect our nationals. But here again, forgive me for being somewhat frank: France's role is not to re-establish order with soldiers throughout the African continent. We cannot substitute ourselves for the responsibility of the African actors themselves. We call on them today to pull themselves together to return to the logic of the Arusha Accords and to find the path to national harmony. This may seem paradoxical at a time when fighting is raging everywhere, but this is our role, rather than transforming ourselves once again into an interventionist power that would send its soldiers everywhere. That is not the role of France.³⁵¹

This "Arusha at any cost" line, justifying France's past and future policies, was echoed the same day by the Minister of Foreign Affairs on Europe 1 radio: "I believe it is our duty to relaunch the dialogue process. It seems impossible when one sees the degree of hatred between the Hutus and the Tutsi, but the Arusha Accords are there and France's role is to do everything possible, with all the countries in the area, with the OAU, with the UN, to try to make reason prevail over the madness that is being unleashed."³⁵²

On Wednesday 13 April, a core cabinet meeting was held at the Élysée on the situation in Bosnia and Rwanda. This meeting, chaired by François Mitterrand, brought together the main political, diplomatic and military leaders of Operation Amaryllis, and took stock of the French intervention and the events in Rwanda. The exchanges between the different actors and the President of the Republic allow us to question the degrees of lucidity and the representations, still in progress at the highest level of the state, on this dramatic moment:

President of the Republic (PR): *It is clear how this murderous attack against President Habyarimana gave the signal to start the massacre. Admiral, can you give us an update on the ground?*

CEMA (Admiral Lanxade): *The RPF will control most of Kigali very quickly, but it is difficult to predict what they will do now. The interim government has left the city. Our nationals have been evacuated. It is now the phase of withdrawal of our troops; the last company will leave this evening.*

A unit of the special forces will remain with the Belgians until tomorrow.

PR: *Will the massacres spread?*

CEMA: *They are already considerable. But now it is the Tutsi who will massacre the Hutus in Kigali [...].*

Minister of Cooperation: *We are in a situation where accounts will be settled on the spot. However, the RPF in Paris contacted us and told us that it would call on France when the time came, that it still had a place in Rwanda. We did not cut ties with the RPF because we had to solve the problem of our three development workers to be repatriated if possible [...].*

PR: *On the whole, this is a situation that we have already experienced elsewhere. France always seems indispensable, once the crisis is over. We have experienced this in Chad. Here, it is a bit special because Rwanda is a former Belgian colony [...] It would be surprising if Habyarimana's government did not find a safe place in the country where it could hold out for a while. We will have a breakdown and a civil war like in Liberia and Angola. But the territory is narrower and more cultivated. It is difficult to hide there.*

Neither the Prime Minister nor the Minister of Defense speaks during this exchange. The Minister of Foreign Affairs only intervened at the end of the meeting to submit “two practical questions” to François Mitterrand. The first concerned the reception of President Habyarimana's immediate family - a decidedly priority issue.³⁵³ The second question, for the first time in the Cabinet, concerns the post-Amayllis situation:

MAE: *At the UN, the Secretary General is due to report tomorrow. There are three possible solutions: the continuation of UNAMIR, its suspension with the possible retention of a symbolic contingent, or a total withdrawal. The Belgians are in favor of a suspension, and that's my opinion too.*

PR: *I agree.*³⁵⁴

President François Mitterrand thus validated, in laconic terms, a second future disengagement of France from Rwanda: a UN disengagement, which would lead to reducing the UNAMIR contingent to symbolic numbers (370 men instead of 2,500), in no way capable of limiting the massacres that French troops witnessed directly during those five days.

As a counterpoint to this exchange at the Élysée, an editorial by the journalist Stephen Smith, entitled “Rwanda and indifference,” appeared in the daily *Libération* the same day. With a polemical approach, the author inserts his analysis of the Rwandan drama of April into the long history of French policy in Africa:

Rwanda seems to give reason to this cynicism and resignation. And yet, unless we confuse all the victims and all the suffering in the same humanitarian sigh of impotence, this tragedy is political and not tribal: a military dictatorship, that of President Juvénal Habyarimana, has maintained itself in power by all means, including French aid [...].

When an RPF column was at the gates of the capital, Kigali, France intervened to save the regime or, according to the official version, to avoid a bloodbath. The contradiction is only too obvious: because, by extending the colonial tribal discourse, Paris had already decided that President Habyarimana represented the "natural majority" - that of the Hutu - and the RPF a virulent ethnic minority: "black Khmers," as the commander of the French contingent on the ground had not hesitated to assert two years ago. In this light, why take the risk of change? [...]

In Rwanda, as elsewhere in Africa - in Zaire, Kenya and even Liberia and Somalia - cynicism and resignation precede "irrational killings." When, on the black continent, people are gutting and mutilating each other to death, it is not so much the return of "eternal Africa" as our unconscious: after having alienated, abandoned and at worst "gifted" the Africans with our surpluses and baubles, the West is armed with indifference. Less and less present on the continent, it only returns to raise the dead and the wounded, with a good humanitarian conscience that does not refuse extreme unction to the dying.³⁵⁵

The next day, 14 April, two press conferences dealing with the "Rwandan drama" were organized by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense. The joint press conference of Alain Juppé and Lucette Michaux-Chevry dealt with France's humanitarian interventions in the world. Contrary to his position expressed the day before in the core cabinet meeting, the Minister of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed the importance of the UN and the presence of UNAMIR in Rwanda. The French authorities are clearly showing an increasingly marked intention to entrust the "Rwandan question" to the United Nations. Lucette Michaux-Chevry announced "peripheral" humanitarian aid to the Rwandan population: she explained that since "old hatreds, old passions have been stirred up," "it is difficult to intervene directly in Kigali" - this, while the French troops have just left Kigali. As a result, "France is therefore providing significant humanitarian aid around Rwanda."³⁵⁶

During a press conference held the same day in Paris with

Admiral Lanxade, François Léotard assured that the departure of French forces from Rwanda was not an “abandonment”. He emphasized that France is “present for a policy of cooperation and development,” but that it “does not have to be a party to conflicts. Regarding past military involvement, the Minister of Defense recalled that “the French armed forces have never been directly involved” in the Rwandan conflict; but on the other hand, France had “a long-standing military cooperation” with Rwanda, including “classic training actions” of its army. In the present engagement, François Léotard announced that “we are currently trying to dialogue with everyone to avoid bloodshed” but recalled that there is “no military solution” to the conflict. He also said that he was ready to “maintain UNAMIR” but “in a form that remains to be defined.”³⁵⁷

At the same time as these criticisms of the French disengagement in Rwanda, increasingly severe questioning of France’s past policies in Rwanda began to emerge in the public debate, with the tragic events of April constituting a terrible acknowledgement of failure. On the same day, an article entitled “Nos amis les tueurs” (Our friends the killers) appeared in the weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur*, directly questioning France’s past political and military involvement in Rwanda: “For several years, Paris has supported the Kigali regime, which has never stopped stirring up ethnic hatred, and has equipped the Praetorian army, which undertook the massacre of Hutu opponents and the Tutsi minority in the aftermath of the death of the President.”³⁵⁸ On 15 April, 1994, the American journalist Franck Smyth questioned in an article in the *Herald Tribune* the responsibilities of France in the over-armament of Rwanda.³⁵⁹

After the total withdrawal of its military forces and its diplomatic representation, France’s Rwandan policy seemed to fall back on two main objectives: external humanitarian aid to displaced persons and Rwandan refugees in neighboring countries; and the contribution to a hypothetical ceasefire in a civil war that appeared increasingly “total”. The journalist Jean Hélène, who was slow to admit the genocidal dimension of the massacres, gave a striking echo of this in an article in *Le Monde*

on April 16. He was one of the first to report on the war crimes committed by the RPF in its reconquest zones:

The "RPF zone" is not free of ethnic abuses. Right in front of the hotel, five corpses lie in a meadow. Witnesses to the scene say that a young RPF fighter shot them in cold blood. "It happened in front of us," said one of them. They are probably Hutu, spies for the RPF. In Rwanda, no one is innocent anymore: one is for or against the other side - and always suspected, depending on one's ethnicity or political leanings, of spying for the opponent.

In the account of the great reporter, these "ethnic abuses" are put on the same level as the genocidal massacres against the Tutsi. However, under his pen, these assassinations seem to reach a new level of barbarity:

On Thursday [14 April], militiamen stopped a Rwandan Red Cross vehicle at one of the countless roadblocks that cut through the arteries of the capital, in the "government zone." The six wounded inside the vehicle were coldly murdered. Following this deadly incident, the Rwandan Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) stopped collecting the wounded and concentrated their efforts on hospitals.³⁶⁰

Thus, while the Western countries and France have cleared out, the Tutsi genocide is taking on a state, national, and popular dimension at the same time. It was from the second half of April onwards, under the impetus of the interim government and the massive involvement of the Hutu community, that the massacres took on an inconceivable scale: almost 20,000 murders per day, for more than a month, hidden from Western eyes.

4.4 QUALIFYING AND REACTING: THE CULPABLE SLOWNESS OF THE FRENCH AND INTERNATIONAL AUTHORITIES (APRIL-MAY 1994)

The reaction of the French authorities to the events underway in Rwanda was characterized by the difficulty of becoming aware of the genocide. This attitude is apparent both at the internal level and at the global and regional levels.

4.4.1 *The concerns of the French authorities at the time of the genocide*

In the early spring of 1994, as far as Africa was concerned, the eyes of the international community were first turned to South Africa, where a long and difficult process of emerging from apartheid was coming to an end, at least on the institutional level. On 27 April, the first general and democratic elections were held, designating a common chamber for the entire population. The two parliamentary assemblies then elected Nelson Mandela as President of the Republic. He was sworn in on May 10 in front of a large number of international political leaders and journalists from all over the world. François Mitterrand did not attend the ceremony but sent his advisor for Africa, Bruno Delaye, and wrote a text on Mandela for *L'événement du jeudi*.³⁶¹ For its part, *Jeune Afrique* made "Mandela, un miracle africain" the cover of its weekly issue of 12-18 May, largely devoted to the subject.³⁶² The same issue published two pages of anonymous testimony from a reader living in Rwanda who described "the organized massacre" in that country; in his view, those responsible were both the MRND-CDR and the RPF, who "both drew up a list of people to be killed" and "competed in horror".

At the same time, a genocide of unprecedented proportions was taking place in Rwanda: between 800,000 and 1,000,000 Tutsi were massacred in less than three months. For several weeks, the French authorities, like the international community, did not identify - or refused to identify - the massacres as a genocide perpetrated against a part of the Rwandan population assigned to an ethnic group. They have other concerns, in particular a fear of the RPF's military advance, which would jeopardize the power sharing defined by the Arusha accords. They therefore maintain relations with the interim government, which is considered the legal government. They are content to step up humanitarian aid for people displaced by the fighting.

4.4.1.1 A GENOCIDE BELATEDLY IDENTIFIED DESPITE NUMEROUS WARNINGS

At the core cabinet meeting of 13 April, François Mitterrand asked whether the situation was calm in Burundi, where the assassination of the president had not triggered the same massacres as the previous autumn. His comment on Alain Juppé's reply - "they have used up their venom for a few weeks" - as well as Admiral Lanxade's words - "now it is the Tutsi who will massacre the Hutu in Kigali"³⁶³ - testify to an "ethno-racial" vision of Africa: that of a continent where inter-ethnic massacres are taking place on a recurring basis. Similarly, the response of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the question of the Breton deputy Marc le Fur, who, on 26 April, inquired about the situation of the Nyundo orphanage in Rwanda and the role that France intended to play in stopping the massacres, evoked an "unfortunate country torn apart by a civil war - a tribal war in fact."³⁶⁴ The expression "tribal conflict" had already been used by François Mitterrand during the core cabinet meeting of 2 April, 1993.³⁶⁵

The French authorities' awareness of the genocidal reality of the massacres was late and unevenly shared. The naming and denunciation of genocide by Alain Juppé on 16 May, 1994, marked an important step, even if other political figures did not immediately share the analysis and he himself used ambiguous language in the weeks that followed, in particular using the plural to designate the "genocidaires."³⁶⁶ Yet there was no shortage of alerts identifying the executioners and the victims, some of them using the term "genocide" at an early stage. These warnings came from NGOs, journalists covering the event, intellectuals familiar with the history of the Great Lakes region, but also from intelligence services such as the DGSE.

Essentially devoted to hypotheses about who was responsible for the attack on the presidential plane, a DGSE file of 11 April also mentions "the systematic purge undertaken by the Presidential Guard [...] against the supporters of democracy" but also the fact that the soldiers of this corps, guided by CDR activists, armed with pre-established lists [...] undertook to massacre all the Tutsi, as well as the Hutu originating from the south or supporting the opposition

parties. The term “genocide” is not used, but its characteristics are emphasized: the systematic and planned aspect of the massacres, the fact that “these liquidations spared neither women nor children.”³⁶⁷ However, the collusion between the Presidential Guard, the militias and the interim government is not yet understood and presented to the political authorities. It will be presented later, at the beginning of May.³⁶⁸

As sources of information on the genocide, NGOs are also working to publicize the reality of the massacres and to mobilize against their continuation. Two of them have left traces in the archives that were consulted: the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Human Rights Watch (HRW). The ICRC was present in Rwanda in the spring of 1994, in various regions but also in Kigali, where it worked in the hospital and had ambulances. It transmitted a certain amount of information to Geneva. On 22 April, it reported that 4,000 Tutsi were in the Kigali stadium, “in relative safety” due to the presence of what was left of UNAMIR.³⁶⁹ Its General Delegate for Africa also emphasizes that most of the dead are not victims of the war but of the massacres: he stresses “the scale of the massacres in Kigali and throughout the country, which have caused more victims than the clashes between government forces and the RPF. [...] The situation currently prevailing in the country cannot be compared to any other in terms of the cruelty and widespread nature of the violence.”³⁷⁰ On 25 April, the ICRC reported that it had to leave Butare, where the “massacres [...] have intensified over the last two days, [...] making any humanitarian intervention impossible: the wounded are being killed before they can be evacuated to hospital.”³⁷¹

At the end of April, its Deputy Director of Operations, Paul Grossrieder, who had just returned from Kigali, met with representatives of Western countries at the United Nations in Geneva, as well as with representatives of the High Commissioner for Refugees (HCR) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). He described the situation to them: a city in which “three quarters of the inhabitants are dead or have fled,” thousands of Tutsi who had taken refuge here and there and who were difficult to help because of “the existence of checkpoints every 250 meters by militiamen in the presence of men in uniform.” He also reports on the meetings he was able to have with the Rwandan authorities and the “president of the militias” from whom he obtained

“the symbolic resumption of evacuations of the wounded in the Committee’s ambulances.” As the French ambassador pointed out, “contrary to the traditions of the ICRC,” Paul Grossrieder called, during this meeting, for “countries with a certain amount of influence with one or other of the belligerent parties to intervene politically,”³⁷² in particular to support the Prime Minister, who appeared to him to be moderate but “isolated by the extremists.” Other information on those responsible for the massacres was also provided and transmitted by the ambassador:

*When asked by the American and Belgian representatives about the links between the militias and the Rwandan army, the head of the ICRC cautiously answered in the affirmative. He had been able to see for himself in his meetings that the chief of staff had a certain amount of influence over the militiamen, who were composed of young extremists from President Habyarimana’s former party and other Hutu parties. Similarly, he noted, without dwelling on it, the role of the Presidential Guard in the massacres, at least at the beginning of the event.*³⁷³

Again on 3 May, the NGO reported on “the continuation of the massacres in the regions controlled by the Rwandan army and militias. In Butare on 30 April, 13 local Red Cross volunteers and 21 orphans were murdered. In Gisenyi on 1 May, 150 civilians who took refuge in the cathedral were massacred. “These operations,” emphasized the Red Cross, “were not carried out by individuals who did not answer to any authority, but were carried out in order to eliminate the Tutsi. Unlike the previous massacres, they did not spare the churches where civilians could formerly find refuge.”³⁷⁴ The organization called on the member countries of the Security Council to intervene. The following week, it expressed “its disappointment at the lack of a concrete response from the international community, in particular from the members of the Security Council approached the previous week, to its call for an end to the massacres and the armed conflict.”³⁷⁵ As the French ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva pointed out, “according to the organization, this deliberate intention to eliminate a part of the population meets the definition of genocide established in the 1948 declaration. The International Committee confirms that it has not observed any serious violations of humanitarian law by the RPF, adding, however, that it has not visited the hills surrounding the main roads.”³⁷⁶ The next day, the same information was communicated to the French delegation in New York: the ICRC “confirms the extent of the massacres that are continuing in Rwanda, massacres for which it

believes governmental elements are primarily responsible”:

*The ICRC delegates on the ground observed the repetition of a pattern whereby government troops, in an attempt to hinder the advance of the RPF, took large groups of Tutsi hostage, then, unable to hold their position, massacred them before withdrawing. This, he concluded, only fanned the flames of RPF hostility, although there was no evidence to suggest that the front itself was carrying out symmetrical killings.*³⁷⁷

For its part, Human Rights Watch (HRW) had already, in January 1994, implicated France for its role in Rwanda in its report entitled “Arms Suppliers to Rwanda: The Arms Trade and Human Rights Violations during the War.” The report had been taken to the French ambassador in Washington, with a letter to be sent to the President of the Republic.³⁷⁸ At the end of April, the NGO, which had received information through various channels - in particular from priests and missionaries who had taken refuge in Burundi - faxed various documents to the presidential adviser for Africa, Bruno Delaye, who had met with members of the NGO in Paris and Washington in the past. On the one hand, a memorandum on what it knows about the situation in Rwanda, on its positions and appeals to the international community: the organization highlights the case of Cyangugu, where “5,000 people have been imprisoned in the stadium since 15 April, with no protection against the rain, no food and no blankets,” and that of Butare, a town far from the fighting, but where the dismissal of the prefect and his replacement by an extremist (20 April) gave the signal for massacres.³⁷⁹ On the other hand, a copy of the letter sent by HRW to Agathe Habyarimana on 25 April to offer her condolences, describe the situation in Rwanda and ask her to intervene with those responsible for the massacres by name: “We are certain that a firm public appeal from you to these men can have a great effect in stopping the massacres.”³⁸⁰

The third document received by Bruno Delaye is a letter addressed to him from Holly Burkhalter, Director in Washington of HRW. The letter uses the term genocide twice. The author says she is “disturbed” to learn that a delegation from the “self-proclaimed government of Rwanda” - the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Jérôme Bicomumpaka, and the President of the CDR, Jean Bosco

Barayagwiza - are being received in Paris at various ministries and at the Élysée.³⁸¹ She reported on the White House statement of 22 April, naming individuals in the Rwandan army as responsible for the massacres and calling on them to stop the atrocities. She said that HRW had met with members of the U.S. government and asked them to contact the French government to use its links with the Rwandan army to stop the genocide campaign. In the end, she asked Bruno Delaye to use his influence so that her message would be transmitted to the Rwandan delegation visiting Paris.³⁸² The latter did not seem to respond or follow up on the request. Shortly afterwards, he produced a very long memo, which was undoubtedly commissioned from him, on “the right and Africa,” with a precise presentation of the internal divisions within this political family and the network struggles that run through it.³⁸³ A concern far removed from the genocide in progress.

Another source of information about the genocide in Rwanda is the accounts of journalists. There were not many of them at the scene of the tragedy in the first weeks of April. Jean-Philippe Ceppi of *Libération* is one of them. Having left Kigali shortly after the Amaryllis troops, he returned to Rwanda through the north of the country, in the wake of the advance of the RPA troops. While the testimonies had been about Kigali until then, J.-P. Ceppi discovered with the RPF troops the traces of the “savage massacres” of the civilian populations in the north and east of the country. Under a title that should alert public opinion - “The Rwandan army leaves mass graves in its wake” - he describes on 19 April, 1994 what he sees and deciphers the systematic mechanism of extermination applied by the military, local representatives and Hutu extremist militiamen:

The scale of the genocide in the Rwandan countryside seems to exceed what was possible to imagine. If the latest figures available in Kigali indicate more than 20,000 dead in the capital alone, how many people in the rest of the country were able to escape the relentless extermination machine?

In the northeast, testimonies are pouring in about the mass graves discovered in the villages occupied by government troops and their henchmen.³⁸⁴

While the ministries and the Élysée had press services, this article by J.-P. Ceppi is not present in the archives consulted or

has not been preserved. Nor was the article by Jean-Pierre Chrétien, a historian at the *Centre de recherches africaines* (Center for Research on Africa), who wrote a powerful analysis of the events in the same newspaper on 26 April. “A tropical Nazism” - the title of the article - “a real African Shoah,” “the same Nazi-like ideology”: the researcher multiplies analogies to make it clear that what is happening is “not archaic ‘interethnic clashes’ but very modern genocides.” Before denouncing “Western blindness” and calling on the political and moral authorities:

*The Western blindness is immeasurable in the face of this tragedy: an ethnographic reading of another age innocently (?) supports ethnic fundamentalism. Moreover, socialists lost in racial populism, Christian democrats, fanatical followers of “their Rwanda,” and human rights associations intoxicated by refugees who are experts in one-way victimization, are supporting mafias whose success is based on the confusion between democratization, ethnic demagoguery, and the exclusion of native minorities.*³⁸⁵

Ambassadors, including François Descoueyte in Kampala, also acted as intermediaries for journalists to inform their supervisory authorities of the testimonies collected. On April 26, he reported on the testimony of three journalists who had entered Rwanda from the Ugandan border up to thirty kilometers from Kigali:

*Lake Mubazi was then, according to their testimony, littered with corpses floating on its surface. In the nearby parish of Mukarange, approximately 2,500 civilians were reportedly locked inside the church by Interahamwe and Rwandan soldiers, who threw grenades into the building. There were reportedly no survivors. Another 1,500 civilians were shot with automatic weapons. In total, only about 400 survivors were reportedly left of this community of 4,000 people. A few kilometers from Kayanza, in Kiziguro and Rukaro, more than a thousand corpses were reportedly counted in each case (men, women, young children).*³⁸⁶

The ambassador reports that the journalists also “witnessed acts of summary justice. *Interahamwe* captured and recognized by the survivors were allegedly executed on the spot by RPF soldiers.” Nevertheless, he states from the outset in the summary of his telegram that this testimony “confirms that the extent of the massacres perpetrated by the Rwandan forces and militias is unfortunately out of all proportion to the abuses otherwise proven by the RPF.” It insists a little further on:

*Various testimonies (missionaries, NGOs) have reached me of abuses committed by the RPF against civilians. But the massacres committed by the militias and various elements of the Rwandan forces are of a completely different dimension. The testimony that I am reporting to the Department unfortunately has every chance of being accurate, if we compare it with many others from all sources (UNAMIR, ICRC, NGOs, religious leaders) that point in the same direction.*³⁸⁷

Finally, we must briefly mention, without claiming to be exhaustive, the role of smaller humanitarian associations - particularly those that helped orphans - and that of individuals who made early attempts to alert certain ministries through letters or telephone calls. This is the case of Thérèse Pujolle, in charge of the crisis unit for the evacuation of European nationals. On 3 May, she informed the Ministry of Cooperation of the difficulties encountered in the planned evacuation of people who had taken refuge, under UNAMIR protection, at the Hôtel des Mille Collines, people who could help "rebuild" after a cease-fire: the convoy had been stopped by militias who had made the passengers get off in order to kill them; pressure from Belgium and the French presidency on the FAR staff stopped the massacre and the convoy, with its wounded, was brought back to the hotel.³⁸⁸ On 10 May, she sent the same ministry the letter she had received from a White Father evacuated from Rwanda, Father Hazard. The letter mentions the missionary's amazement at having just learned that Agathe Habyarimana had been evacuated and that she was receiving large subsidies from France, even though she was "a leading instigator in the formation and arming of the popular militias that have been bloodying the country." The member of the cabinet who received this letter wrote: "This letter is revealing of the state of mind of the members of the clergy. It advocates in favor of the prudence observed until now on this issue."³⁸⁹

While the Rwandan situation is becoming better known, the French authorities feel a certain embarrassment for having welcomed Agathe Habyarimana, the widow of the deceased president but also an extremist figure: France's image may be clouded by this. They also had other concerns, as the situation seemed to escape them on the international scene while the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda was growing.

4.4.1.2 PERSISTENT HOSTILITY TOWARDS THE RPF BUT THE SEARCH FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION

On 11 April, when the genocide had begun, Philippe Baudillon, diplomatic advisor at Matignon, wrote a memo for the Prime Minister. While the second point refers to the French evacuation mechanism, and the third envisages dramatic prospects - "There is a strong probability that the situation on the ground will degenerate significantly and that the confrontations will be increasingly bloody" - the first point is entirely devoted to the military situation and the threat posed by the RPF to Kigali:

The RPF (mostly Tutsi) is said to have infiltrated three to four hundred men about ten kilometers from the capital, and Rwandan troops (the FAR, mostly Hutu) are currently standing between these RPF troops and Kigali. The core of RPF troops in Kigali is holding out well for the moment. Access to the airport is still possible. It is currently held by the FAR. In the coming hours, there is a strong possibility that the RPF troops outside and inside the capital will attempt to join forces. Very hard fighting could then take place there.³⁹⁰

The RPF appeared all the more dangerous in April 1994 because of the fear that it might receive reinforcements of demobilized men from the Ugandan army (NRA). Indeed, as the ambassador in Kampala explained, the second stage of the demobilization of NRA soldiers began on 16 April and involved 10,000 men. Since this army was made up of about 10% Rwandans and some soldiers do not want to return to civilian life, "we can estimate that this operation will bring a maximum of about 2,000 reinforcements to the RPF," i.e. an increase of 10% in RPF forces.³⁹¹ The figures in the telegram were highlighted by Bruno Delaye, who advised the President to read it.

At the end of April, the Elysée advisor, Bruno Delaye, did not deny the massacres - estimated at 100,000 dead - or the role of the militias who, "armed with grenades and machetes, massacred the Tutsi who had not been able to find refuge in the RPF zone or benefit from the protection of UNAMIR." But he portrays an RPF at the gates of Kigali, capable of mobilizing French and international opinion on the theme of "liberators" opposed to the "extremists of the Rwandan government," accusing the impotent United Nations and France, which

supported the “dictator Habyarimana.” Bruno Delaye also placed the “Rwanda problem” in its regional context and proposed both putting pressure on President Museveni (Uganda) “so that he will reason with the RPF” and introducing President Mobutu (Zaire) into the regional game.³⁹² For the Africa advisor, who was undoubtedly reflecting François Mitterrand’s innermost thoughts, “there is no question of leaving the settlement initiatives in the hands of the English-speaking countries alone (Uganda and Tanzania) without involving the main French-speaking neighbor, namely Zaire.”³⁹³ In fact, contacts with President Museveni became frequent and mobilized the ambassador in Kampala, who reported on his meetings, such as the one of 29 April, which, at the request of the Ugandan president, lasted two hours and specified “the elements of Franco-Ugandan agreement on the origins of the Rwandan problem and on the solution that should be promoted jointly.”³⁹⁴

The idea that the RPF would threaten the Francophonie and French interests in this region of Africa was expressed even more firmly by the President’s Chief of Staff, General Quesnot, who coined the foil concept of “Tutsiland,” which was used at the Élysée by himself and by Bruno Delaye.³⁹⁵ The memo from the Chief of Staff, dated 6 May, which ends with a lapidary: “Is this what we want?” is exemplary in this respect. The general reported to François Mitterrand on the call from the interim head of State of Rwanda, Théodore Sindikubwabo, described as “very old and in poor health.” He passed on the latter’s thanks for the welcome given to the Rwandan delegation and repeated, without any distancing, the content of his remarks: the Rwandan head of State wanted the Arusha agreements to be applied but believed that the RPF, aided by Uganda, had the sole objective of taking power by force. On the other hand, without relying on direct contact with the RPF, General Quesnot accuses:

*On the ground, the RPF refuses any cease-fire and will have incessantly achieved its war aims: the control of the entire eastern part of Rwanda including the capital in order to ensure territorial continuity between Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. President Museveni and his allies will thus have constituted a “Tutsiland” with Anglo-Saxon help and the objective complicity of our false intellectuals, remarkable relays of a Tutsi lobby to which a part of our state apparatus is also sensitive.*³⁹⁶

General Quesnot added an ethnicist argument that he knew was shared by François Mitterrand: the victory of those whom he also called “the RPF rebels” would lead to lasting instability in the region because “the Hutu who were in the majority (85%) in Rwanda and Burundi would not accept Tutsi control.”³⁹⁷

It is not easy to document precisely, due to the lack of available sources, General Quesnot’s allusion to the divergences in the state apparatus on the question of Rwanda in the spring of 1994. In the archives consulted, there is only the trace of the holding of three core cabinet meetings between 13 April and 15 June: 20 April, 3 May and 18 May. The one on 3 May is mentioned in a memo from Édouard Balladur’s cabinet director. The reports of the other two are succinct and give more importance to the situation in Bosnia.³⁹⁸ On 20 April, the Minister for Cooperation, Michel Roussin, reported on the evacuation completed the previous week and declared that “one day or another, negotiations will open for a cease-fire and the re-application of the Arusha Accords,” which François Mitterrand also concluded. On 18 May, Alain Juppé explained the recent decision of the UN Security Council on the reinforcement of UNAMIR, the Prime Minister, who was asked by the President of the Republic, replied that he had spoken to him directly.

However, it is possible to formulate a hypothesis. General Quesnot’s allusion undoubtedly relates to the fact that members of the government, in particular the Minister of Foreign Affairs, refused military aid to the interim government that had come to ask for it at the end of April.³⁹⁹ On 25 April, an unsigned memo on the letterhead of the “Ministry of Foreign Affairs - French Embassy in Kigali,” while not favorable to the RPF, which was accused of refusing a ceasefire, already considered that, in the future, “the balance of power should be translated into political terms” and that “in this respect, each party has its own problems,” the RPF’s problem being “the political transformation of an eventual military victory.”⁴⁰⁰ Other memos from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs consider that France should refuse to choose between the Rwandan parties and contribute to a political resolution; and therefore respect the arms embargo on Rwanda decided by the United Nations (Resolution 918).⁴⁰¹

Jean-Michel Marlaud, the French ambassador in Kigali, was sent on a mission to assess and make contacts around 10 May. In Tanzania, he met with the Prime Minister, representatives of the two Rwandan parties, and the special representative of the United Nations Secretary General. He then traveled to Uganda, Burundi, and Zaire, where he was received by the three heads of State. The long memo he sent on 13 May from Kinshasa, which was widely distributed, gave a precise and nuanced reflection. The ambassador first confirmed the scale of the massacres in the government zone, “described by some as genocide,” and emphasized that “there is no testimony of such acts on a comparable scale in the RPF zone”. He also confirmed the intransigence of the two belligerents and the risks of destabilization in the region. He advised rejecting the logic of war in favor of a negotiated political solution, supporting the efforts of the countries in the region to resolve the conflict, and mobilizing the international community in favor of Rwanda, suggesting that, in addition to these elements of continuity in French policy, “the search for and punishment of those responsible for the massacres” be added. Among the follow-up to his mission, he suggested receiving Faustin Twagiramungu, the Prime Minister designated by the Arusha Accords,⁴⁰² in Paris. The latter was received by the Director of African and Malagasy Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jean-Marc de La Sablière, on 19 May. The meeting covered many points. Faustin Twagiramungu, who welcomed Alain Juppé’s recognition on 16 May of the existence of genocide in Rwanda,⁴⁰³ explained in particular that the interim government was illegal, that pressure had to be put on the belligerents and that “the moderates” had to be supported, and that power sharing was the only solution. He added - but his words are reported in indirect style - that he did not see what specific action to take to obtain a cease-fire and considered it important “that the RPF have the illusion of success on the ground so that political negotiations can resume with a view to implementing the Arusha agreements.”⁴⁰⁴ He was also received by Jean-Marc Simon at the Ministry of Cooperation, to whom he gave “an excellent impression of moderation and seriousness” but who found “very optimistic” the thesis that a political settlement was possible.⁴⁰⁵

On the side of the security services, not all the analyses proposed were hostile to the RPF either. By the end of April, some members of the

DGSE foresaw the future scenario of a military victory for the RPF in Rwanda, while still believing it possible to convince Colonel Bagosora, Director of Cabinet of the Rwandan Ministry of Defense and a notorious extremist, “to put an end to the systematic extermination of Tutsi.” They wrote in the final commentary of their memo: “The fracture created by the ethnic killings is now so sharp that the RPF seems to have no other solution than military victory and the total destruction of the Presidential Guard.”⁴⁰⁶ A week later, others were discussing whether or not to support “government forces.” Their memos are dated the same day – 2 May - but their conclusions are divergent. The first considered that ending support would mean “wiping the slate clean of four years of Franco-Rwandan cooperation,” calling into question “the credibility of France’s specific action in Africa,” and accepting a regime that, based on an ethnic minority, could not be sustainable.⁴⁰⁷ The other, which emphasizes that “the Presidential Guard and the Hutu militias close to the CDR have attacked all the Tutsi in the country,” highlights a dilemma: “how can Rwanda be helped - particularly on the political level - when the only interlocutor truly representative of the majority ethnic group, the interim government, has a clear responsibility in the current massacres?” It suggests starting by condemning the actions of the Presidential Guard and Colonel Bagosora, and by giving Faustin “Twagiramungu - a key figure in the Arusha Accords and the rare surviving representative of the moderate Rwandan opposition - a place of prominence.”⁴⁰⁸

4.4.1.3 MAINTAINING LINKS WITH THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT (IRG) BUT REFUSING MILITARY AID

In the search for a negotiated solution that would not leave all the power to a militarily victorious RPF, the French authorities consider the interim government to be one of the Rwandan “parties.” They also consider it to be the legal government of Rwanda, represented at the United Nations, where the country is one of the ten temporary members of the Security Council in the spring of 1994. For its part, the IRG considers France to be an ally in its fight against the RPF and expects it to provide political and military assistance.

Military aid: a file from the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DRM), dated 15 April, mentions specific requests for ammunition and assistance in transporting arms purchased in Israel and Poland, requests made by the defense attaché of the Rwandan embassy in Paris. The response is not known, but a memo dated 8 April from the General Secretariat of National Defense (SGDN) suspended the validity of export permits for war materiel to Rwanda and Burundi as a precautionary measure, a decision that was endorsed by the core cabinet meeting of 3 May 1994.

Political aid: The new interim Rwandan president, Théodore Sindikubwabo, sent a message of thanks to François Mitterrand on 17 April. Very hostile to Belgium, which was accused of complicity with the RPF, he thanked France for the help it had provided since the “aggression” of October 1990, which had prevented the destabilization of Rwanda. Unless we are mistaken, this message was not kept in the presidential archives. It was discovered in the archives of the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, with an exclamation mark in the margin next to the sentence about the non-destabilization of the country by an unidentified reader.⁴⁰⁹ Similarly, there is no trace in Bruno Delaye’s archives of the visit to Paris on 26 and 27 April, 1994 of an IRG delegation that included the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Jérôme Bicamumpaka, and the President of the CDR, Jean Bosco Barayagwiza.

The delegation was received on 26 June [*sic* – it was April] at the Ministry of Cooperation, not by the minister, but by his deputy director of cabinet, Jean-Marc Simon, who reported back. The Rwandan minister began by repeating the arguments and exaggerations used since 1990 to obtain French aid: his government “sincerely wishes to conclude a cease-fire” and the responsibility for the stalemate lies with the RPF; the latter is receiving massive aid from Uganda - the presence of five or six battalions of the Ugandan army in the north-east of the country and, in its airspace, Ugandan combat helicopters and reconnaissance planes; Uganda dreams of “creating a confederation of ethnic groups that are close to one another.” He then formulates diplomatic demands - to encourage the RPF to negotiate and put pressure on Museveni - but also military demands: “consider giving strong signals, similar to those

in Chad that were given to Libya in the past, to contain Ugandan ambitions.”⁴¹⁰ This suggests a military intervention by France in Rwanda. Jérôme Bicomupaka announced in the end that he would return in about ten days and would like to be received by the Minister. Did this meeting take place? We have not found any trace of it.

The Rwandan delegation was received the next day, 27 April 1994, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by the Minister in person and not by the Director of African and Malagasy Affairs, Jean-Marc de La Sablière.⁴¹¹ The latter prepared a memo for his minister, a memo which, in diplomatic language, was very critical of the interim government: it was true that the massacres “were carried out by both parties, but the testimonies indicate that the extremist Hutu were carrying them out on a larger scale”; it was also true that the RPF was “intransigent” and did not want to talk to the interim government, but “the latter is not free of criticism. It is representative of the hardline Hutu tendency.”⁴¹² As a result, he advised “to give a negative response to the request for the supply of arms” from the Rwandan minister and to put pressure on the countries in the region to stop the delivery and circulation of arms. This advice was also a response to the concern not to be “accused of supplying arms to the conflict.”⁴¹³ The responsibility of France in the Rwandan crisis was then more and more frequently put forward by associations and the media, the visit of the Rwandan delegation having undoubtedly crystallized old accusations. Language to be used to respond to the criticism was circulated to the various departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: it explains and justifies the policy conducted by France in Rwanda since 1990, as well as the actions undertaken since the April attack.⁴¹⁴

We do not have an account of Jérôme Bicomupaka’s meeting with Alain Juppé, but the Rwandan delegation did not get what it had hoped for. It was even less well received in Bonn, where the Africa Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed doubts about the legitimacy of the IRG and demanded an immediate halt to the massacres.⁴¹⁵ The expression of gratitude sent by telephone to François Mitterrand on 6 May by the interim president Théodore Sindikubwabo, through General Quesnot,⁴¹⁶ appears to be an attempt to maintain a privileged relationship with France and a subterfuge to speak directly

to the President of the Republic. François Mitterrand did not take the call: was it an impossibility of scheduling or a deliberate distancing?

Theodore Sindikubwabo called General Quesnot again on 22 May, 1994, and at the same time sent a letter to François Mitterrand, through the intermediary of the Rwandan defense attaché in Paris. Punctuated by three “Mr. President,” the letter is a desperate call for help. It first emphasized that the military situation was “very serious and even worrying,” the Rwandan Armed Forces having had to “withdraw from Kigali international airport for lack of ammunition”; also that Uganda’s support was decisive and prevented the resumption of negotiations. It then presents the actions of the interim authorities in a favorable and misleading light: pacification of the country with the support of the government and the army; “an end to inter-ethnic massacres, at least in the part we control.” Finally, in the name of the Rwandan people, it presents, with many circumlocutions, gratitude and an explicit request for help:

The Rwandan people express their feelings of gratitude for the moral, diplomatic and material support that you have given them since 1990 until today. In their name, I appeal once again to your generous understanding and that of the French people by asking you to provide us once again with your material and diplomatic support. Without your urgent help, our aggressors risk carrying out their plans, which are known to you.

In the hope that you will show your usual understanding, I ask you, Mr. President, to accept the assurances of my highest consideration.⁴¹⁷

The response, if any, has not been found in the presidential archives, and no further requests for assistance appear to have been made, at least in written form. In mid-May, the IRG remains an interlocutor for the French authorities and one of two parties in a desired power-sharing negotiation. It is not a government to be assisted militarily.

The letter from Théodore Sindikubwabo, which arrived by fax, was handed to François Mitterrand on 24 May by General Quesnot, accompanied by a memo. The Chief of Staff repeated the themes of the Rwandan president on “the material, military and diplomatic aid of Uganda,” also deploring “the implicit complicity of all

the other powers.” He again describes a totalitarian RPF and allusively denigrates those who do not anticipate the coming catastrophe:

*The arrival in power in the region of a minority whose goals and organization are not without analogy with the Khmer Rouge system is a guarantee of regional instability whose consequences were not anticipated by those, including in France, whose complicity and complacency are patent.*⁴¹⁸

The memo concludes with remarks about the reinforced UNAMIR and France’s humanitarian contribution.

4.4.1.4 AN EMPHASIS ON HUMANITARIANISM

The French response to the events in Rwanda was first and foremost humanitarian, in pursuit of a policy that aimed to alleviate the human and social consequences of the civil war; in particular, to respond to food shortages and to help the displaced populations fleeing the RPF advance. Shortly before the visit to Rwanda at the end of January 1994 by Lucette Michaux-Chevry, Minister for Humanitarian Action and Human Rights, Ambassador Marlaud wrote: “Rwanda must face the problems posed by displaced persons, refugees and famine. The many difficulties that will arise in the coming months can only be resolved in a comprehensive manner and within the framework of the peace agreements.”⁴¹⁹

This humanitarian aid increased in the following months and was highlighted by the government to emphasize that France was not remaining inactive in the face of what was often described as “the Rwandan drama”. A large part of the meeting of the crisis unit on 17 May was devoted to this issue: the camps for displaced persons in Burundi and Tanzania and the airlifts set up from Kampala and Nairobi were mentioned. The few figures taken in memos by Jean-Marc Simon do not make it possible to measure the extent of the aid provided by France: 300 tons transported in 20 days by airlift, 4,000 tons of wheat equivalent distributed through the World Food Program.⁴²⁰ A memo drawn up the day before in the office of the Ministry of Cooperation gives further details: France made a plane (Boeing 707) available to the UNHCR, which flew from Nairobi and Djibouti from 18 to 20 April to build up stocks of relief materials in

Burundi and Zaire (960,000 francs). It made exceptional contributions to international organizations: five million francs to the UNHCR, two million to the Red Cross and Red Crescent, and one million to the World Food Program. A summary figure is given by General Quesnot in his memo of 31 May: 32 million francs have been devoted to this humanitarian aid over the past two months. He also stated that “the government believes that France’s action should be directed primarily towards humanitarian aid.”⁴²¹ This is an insufficient response to the reality of the genocide.

4.4.2 War, genocide or humanitarian crisis? France and the United Nations

As the massacres began and the RPF launched its offensive, the United Nations seemed for a long time to analyze the situation solely as a war, without perceiving the genocide. An initial resolution considerably restricted its presence on the ground. Awareness of the scale of the massacres, but also of the displacement of the population, led the UN to vote shortly afterwards for a theoretical strengthening of UNAMIR.

4.4.2.1 A DRASTIC REDUCTION IN UNAMIR (RESOLUTION 912)

Three options were considered for the future of UNAMIR: reinforcement, outright withdrawal, and maintaining a symbolic contingent. France rejected the first two options and chose the third, as did most delegations. On the other hand, France is characterized by a sustained attention to the fate of the RPF in the texts adopted by the UN.

The Rwandan representative immediately called for the strengthening of UNAMIR and wanted to see it transformed into “an interposition force.”⁴²² For more selfless reasons, Nigeria, on behalf of the non-aligned States, called for an increase in the number of UNAMIR personnel and a revision of its mandate to enable it to “restore order and legality.”⁴²³ The international community, he explained, had a “moral duty” not to abandon the Rwandans to their fate.⁴²⁴ The French permanent representative “notes that this draft makes explicit reference to the RPF in order to encourage it to stop

fighting and to commit to negotiating a comprehensive political settlement. On the other hand, the idea of transforming UNAMIR into a peacekeeping force was rejected by Jean-Bernard Mérimée, France's representative to the UN: "The coercive nature of the mission seems ill-suited to the current situation. It implies a substantial reinforcement of the force and its means, which is not very feasible."⁴²⁵ Earlier in the day, the Department did not even mention this possibility among the available options.⁴²⁶

Nor does France find the outright withdrawal of UNAMIR appealing. It certainly supports Belgium's decision to withdraw its contingent after the murder of ten of its peacekeepers:

*I stressed that, given the extremely difficult situation in which the Belgian peacekeepers found themselves, it was necessary to show understanding towards Brussels, which had had to make difficult decisions for which they could not be held responsible. The Belgians were in real danger. It was therefore legitimate for them to announce the repatriation of their contingent.*⁴²⁷

But if the Department told Mérimée "to indicate our full readiness to support the position that Belgium will adopt on the question of the future of UNAMIR," it was because it thought that this position was that of "a partial withdrawal, ruling out the options of maintaining the same and of total withdrawal."⁴²⁸ France never envisaged a total withdrawal of UNAMIR. It clearly rejected it, particularly because of the RPF's advance: "The abrupt withdrawal of UNAMIR [must] be ruled out because of the scale of the violence, the withdrawal of the Belgian contingent, the RPF's march on Kigali, and the total absence of authority."⁴²⁹

The solution chosen by France, like most of the members of the Security Council, does not differ much from a total withdrawal. France simply intended to maintain "a UNAMIR presence [...] in Rwanda or in another neighboring country."⁴³⁰ On 15 April, in accordance with the Department's instructions,⁴³¹ Jean-Bernard Mérimée supported the Russian and British proposal to leave only 200 men on the ground. This option was presented as a "reasonable compromise and the choice closest to our views."⁴³² It was supported by the majority of the members of the Security Council. Resolution 912, adopted on 21 April, therefore reduced the number of UNAMIR troops to a "minimal level," wrote the Deputy Permanent

Representative of France. “It was decided to adopt the resolution this evening to allow the evacuation of 900 people tomorrow.”⁴³³

For the Quai d’Orsay, this embryonic force will make it possible to support “a possible resumption of a settlement process. Even if it seems paradoxical at a time when violence is raging, we must continue our efforts to find a political solution.”⁴³⁴ The Department specified four days later that this handful of UNAMIR soldiers should “act as intermediaries between the parties to try to obtain their agreement to a cease-fire.” The aim is to “preserve the possibility of dialogue between the parties to the conflict. When the time comes, the parties will have to meet around the UN representatives: the special representative (who would have the confidence of the Hutu) and the UNAMIR commander (who has the confidence of the RPF).”⁴³⁵

Throughout the discussions leading up to this resolution, most members of the Security Council considered only this solution. Opposition to the ongoing massacres was only mentioned by the non-aligned States. France followed the majority position, without putting itself particularly forward (it did not intend in any case “to engage in mediation”⁴³⁶), but the archives consulted do not make it possible to establish that it would vote for this resolution “reluctantly,” as Jean-Bernard Mérimée would later declare.⁴³⁷ If it could not bear the main responsibility for the abandonment of the population, it was nevertheless distinguished from the other delegations by the precise knowledge it had of the situation in Rwanda. It has just evacuated its nationals and was able to observe that the 500 soldiers of Operation Amaryllis were no doubt insufficient in number to ensure security in the face of the extreme violence underway in Kigali.

4.4.2.2 Theoretical reinforcement of the UNAMIR (Resolution 918)

Although the United Nations practically withdrew from Rwanda with Resolution 912, it did not lose interest in the situation. Several delegations were particularly mobilized. On 28 April, the Czech Republic called for the rapid adoption of a resolution condemning the genocide.⁴³⁸ The Permanent Representative of

New Zealand, which still held the presidency of the Security Council for two days, submitted a draft presidential statement recognizing that genocide was taking place in Rwanda.⁴³⁹ On 29 April, the Department indicated its wish that the text should “also refer to the massacres that were perpetrated under the responsibility of the RPF.” A wording was proposed according to which “attacks against defenseless civilians were perpetrated by all parties,” while recognizing that “they appear to have been perpetrated mainly by members or supporters of the Armed Forces of the former Government of Rwanda.”⁴⁴⁰ France won the argument on this point.⁴⁴¹

The text of the draft presidential statement was adopted on the evening of 29 April, “after long and difficult discussions.”⁴⁴² As Jean-Bernard Mérimée recounts,

*this text was the subject of lively exchanges concerning the inclusion or not of the notion of genocide. A compromise was reached at the last minute (§2 and 3 of the text) not to resort to this legal concept. In the final text, it is now mentioned, in support of the tragic events that took place in Rwanda, that the fact of killing the members of an ethnic group with the intention of destroying that group in whole or in part constitutes a crime punishable under international law.*⁴⁴³

Jean-Bernard Mérimée explains that “the President of New Zealand used all his weight to obtain a consensus on this formulation”. The Czech Republic, Argentina and the United States finally accepted it, while China and the non-aligned countries maintained their disagreement. Unfortunately, the position defended by France was not specified.

The French representative also pointed out that during the negotiations, the Secretary General had written to the Security Council to report “a worsening of the situation in Rwanda and the preparation of new massacres. Mr. Boutros-Ghali therefore recommended that the Council “re-examine the decisions it has taken under Resolution 912 and consider what initiatives it could take to restore order and put an end to the massacres.”⁴⁴⁴ Jean-Bernard Mérimée insists on a point in the Secretary General’s letter that foreshadows the support he will give to Operation Turquoise: “I note that the text of the letter explicitly refers to forceful actions that can be authorized by the Security Council in favor of member states acting in their national capacity.”⁴⁴⁵

For the time being, France was quick to say that it was in favor of setting up a UN “humanitarian mission”: “The absence of a cease-fire and the extent of the fighting and massacres do not make it possible to envisage the deployment of a force whose mandate would be to monitor the cessation of the fighting, let alone to restore peace. Only a humanitarian mission aimed at enabling the delivery of aid and the protection of the civilian population is conceivable.”⁴⁴⁶

France therefore finally gave up on making the achievement of a cease-fire the prerequisite for any large-scale action, as did the Secretary-General, who at the same time used the word “genocide” for the first time.⁴⁴⁷ France’s efforts in the negotiations that began, deserve to be studied from two particular angles: the question of the use of force, and the question of the people that the reinforced UNAMIR would be called upon to protect.

On 10 May, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs examined two draft resolutions circulated to “provide food for thought for the Council” while awaiting the Secretary-General’s proposals. The non-aligned States considered placing UNAMIR under Chapter VII to allow it to proceed with the “restoration of order” in Rwanda. This proposal seems “too ambitious” to the Quai d’Orsay. The New Zealand proposal, on the other hand, is attracting attention. In particular, it provides for an arms embargo, and for UNAMIR to be mandated under Chapter VII “to establish ‘safe zones’ for refugees and displaced persons, to ensure the protection of humanitarian aid operations, to use force if necessary to protect safe zones and to defend UN personnel.”⁴⁴⁸ France declared itself in favour of such a proposal, even if it seemed unlikely to obtain the agreement of the parties to the conflict in Rwanda.⁴⁴⁹

On the same day, the Secretary-General reported that the number of refugees or displaced persons had reached one and a half million and recommended that UNAMIR be strengthened by up to 5,500 men with the task of ensuring the protection of refugees and humanitarian convoys.⁴⁵⁰ The Department immediately expressed its satisfaction, with two reservations. First, while it accepted the deployment of the expanded UNAMIR before any cease-fire, it considered it necessary to obtain the agreement of the Rwandan Armed Forces and the RPF. Second, the Department emphasizes the importance

of allowing UNAMIR to authorize force in certain circumstances.

*With regard to the mandate, its scope remains initially limited, as we wished, to the humanitarian domain. The use of force, solely to protect refugees in “safe zones” that are under threat, seems a realistic solution. However, it is difficult to conceive of without recourse to Chapter VII and on the sole basis of legitimate Defense. In view of the Yugoslav precedent, the Department wonders how the Blue Helmets could effectively protect refugees by operating under Chapter VI.*⁴⁵¹

While New Zealand supported the idea of authorizing the use of force, the Secretary-General and a number of delegations were opposed.⁴⁵² On 13 May, when the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights had just described the Tutsi massacres as “genocide”⁴⁵³ and the draft resolution was being circulated, the Department told Jean-Bernard Mérimée to insist on the importance of using Chapter VII.

*The Department asks you to make it clear that we consider recourse to Chapter VII necessary in this case. We do not intend to use it as a reason for blocking the process, but we want to set a date and hold the Council accountable. One cannot at the same time ask UNAMIR to “ensure safe conditions for displaced persons” and deny it the means to prepare, in advance, in an effective and systematic manner, for the use of force to dissuade or militarily repel on the ground those who would attack the refugees in order to massacre them. Placing UNAMIR under Chapter VI risks, in the name of realism, increasing the disappointment of those who believe that the United Nations must be able to completely fulfill its mandate.*⁴⁵⁴

After a few days’ delay, as requested by the Americans,⁴⁵⁵ the Department was satisfied with the revised draft resolution. Indeed, even if recourse to Chapter VII did not win a majority of votes, the debate initiated by France “at least made it possible to clarify this question and to devote a paragraph to it in the operative part of the resolution.”⁴⁵⁶ This paragraph specifies that the ground of legitimate defense, which allows the use of force even within the framework of Chapter VI, is not restricted to self-protection but may allow action to save others.⁴⁵⁷ In order to reinforce this, the Department soon afterwards asked Jean-Bernard Mérimée to indicate to the Secretary-General that in the event

of an attack on the Hôtel des Mille Collines, the Blue Helmets of the reinforced UNAMIR could use force: “You will take this opportunity to reiterate our understanding of the use of force by UNAMIR, to which a new mandate is going to be given: we believe that in the event of an assault on the hotel, and even if the Blue Helmets are not directly hit or threatened, they will have to retaliate in order to protect civilians.”⁴⁵⁸ The Secretary-General immediately agreed.⁴⁵⁹

Resolution 918 was adopted on 17 May, 1994, after an intervention by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the interim government that Jean-Bernard Mérimée described as “an extremely virulent speech with racist overtones [which] referred in particular to ‘the cruel and ruthless domination of the Hutu majority by a haughty and domineering Tutsi minority’.”⁴⁶⁰ Rwanda voted against the arms embargo imposed by this resolution,⁴⁶¹ but in favor of the rest of the text, which provided for the gradual reinforcement of UNAMIR to the tune of 5,500 troops and specified that the Blue Helmets could act in legitimate defense to protect the population. The next day, in a memo prepared for the Minister of Defense on a trip to Rwanda, the deputy diplomatic adviser, Laurent Bili, was able to rightly mention this diplomatic success for France: “we have - thanks to our insistence - obtained clarifications on the rules of engagement that make the mandate of this force more credible.”⁴⁶² The way in which Jean-Bernard Mérimée presented this resolution two months later in preparation for the Prime Minister’s visit to the United Nations was both more precise and more problematic.

*The magnitude of the massacres for which those responsible were named, the discovery of what remained a taboo word for a time, genocide, and the importance of the media coverage in the United States awakened the guilty conscience of certain members who had campaigned for the withdrawal of UNAMIR and led the Council, on the recommendation of the Secretary-General, to adopt Resolution 918 on 16 May [17 May, the official date], which decided to increase the strength of UNAMIR by up to 5,500 men. The mandate was as follows: to contribute to the security and protection of displaced persons, including through the establishment and maintenance of safe humanitarian areas, and to assist in the delivery of humanitarian assistance.*⁴⁶³

The statement reveals an ambiguity within Resolution 918. In Jean-Bernard Mérimée’s presentation of the text, the content does not correspond to the motivations: the Security Council seems to have done

something other than what it wanted to do. Indeed, if the goal was to put an end to the genocide, why define UNAMIR's mandate as the protection of "displaced persons"? Is it to prevent massacres or to provide food and sanitation in the refugee camps? In reality, Resolution 918 addresses two issues: UNAMIR is mandated to "contribute to the security and protection of internally displaced persons, refugees and civilians in danger in Rwanda, including through the establishment and maintenance of [...] safe humanitarian areas." Genocide, which the resolution defines without naming it, is therefore taken into account alongside massive population displacements, without being differentiated from them.

However, although France alerted the Secretary-General to the situation of the people threatened in the Hôtel des Mille Collines,⁴⁶⁴ its attention seemed to be focused, throughout the preparation of Resolution 918, on displaced persons and not on the victims of genocide. Its insistence on the humanitarian nature of the mission⁴⁶⁵ already bears witness to this. Indeed, as *Médecins sans Frontières* would later express it, "you cannot stop genocide with doctors."⁴⁶⁶ On 13 May, a telegram sent from the Department to the Directorate of African and Malagasy Affairs shows that humanitarian aid and protection against violence are two different things: "For your information, the NGOs present in Rwanda, which are essentially French, believe that it would be desirable for the mandate to focus on the protection of civilian populations and not on the delivery of humanitarian aid."⁴⁶⁷

The disconnection between the humanitarian and the genocide is also reflected in the statement of the French representative that it is appropriate to "concentrate on the humanitarian aspects of the Rwandan question in order to bring relief to the thousands of refugees whose lives were threatened."⁴⁶⁸ The beneficiaries of the protection provided by the reinforced UNAMIR are systematically described as "displaced persons"⁴⁶⁹ or "refugees."⁴⁷⁰ Of course, the latter term can also, in some contexts, refer to individuals threatened in the context of genocide. The Department thus refers to "refugees from the Hôtel des Mille Collines."⁴⁷¹ But generally speaking, what characterizes people targeted by genocide is not the fact that they have "taken refuge" somewhere. If France insists strongly on allowing the expanded UNAMIR to

use force, it is not primarily to confront those who are massacring the Tutsi, even if this possibility is clearly envisaged. It is another danger that the Department seems to be thinking about first and foremost: "One cannot at the same time ask UNAMIR 'to ensure safe conditions for displaced persons' and deny it the means to prepare, in advance, in an effective and systematic manner, for the use of force to deter or militarily repel on the ground those who would assault the refugees to massacre them."⁴⁷² The main target therefore seems to be the RPF, which France suspects of wanting to attack the crowds fleeing its advance, among whom, it must be remembered, are *genocidaires*.

It is in no way a question of minimizing the humanitarian catastrophe that the massive displacement of the population in Rwanda is causing at this time, nor of criticizing the will to remedy it. Moreover, neither France nor the Security Council seems to want to ignore the genocide, even if they do not name it. But the systematic massacres of the Tutsi are treated alongside the humanitarian catastrophe of the refugees, without the two being clearly differentiated. As the permanent representative of the Czech Republic stated after the vote, "This situation is described as a humanitarian crisis, as if it were a famine or perhaps a natural disaster. My delegation believes that the correct term is genocide."⁴⁷³ In this respect, Resolution 918 foreshadows some of the misunderstandings that will soon surround Operation Turquoise.

4.4.2.3 THE CONSEQUENCES OF RESOLUTION 918

Resolution 918 does not in the least imply the instant return of the United Nations to Rwanda. It simply provides for the immediate redeployment of a few soldiers, and requests the Secretary-General to "report as soon as possible on the next phase of the deployment of UNAMIR." It also asked him "to obtain from member states the personnel necessary to allow the deployment of the expanded UNAMIR to take place as a matter of urgency."

France was immediately asked to make equipment available. The Secretary-General asked France to provide twenty trucks and fifty armored vehicles.⁴⁷⁴ The Quai d'Orsay agreed in principle to the first request⁴⁷⁵ but indicated that the Ministry of

Defense considered it “impossible” to satisfy the second.⁴⁷⁶ On the other hand, Boutros Boutros-Ghali did not call upon France to contribute to the personnel of the future force. In the perspective of a future request, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that the sending of French peacekeepers would probably not be viewed favorably by the RPF. The only possibility would probably be to take charge of a medical unit.

Given the need to obtain the agreement of the parties on the deployment of the force and the likely objections of the RPF, the only possibility of a French contribution seems to be in the medical field (proposal to take charge of a medical and surgical unit). The question would arise if the RPF were to disagree, whether the installation of such a unit outside of Rwandan territory (probably at the border) would constitute a contribution likely to be retained by the Secretariat.⁴⁷⁷

If France does not contribute in terms of personnel, it will nevertheless follow closely the constitution of the enlarged UNAMIR: the Department wishes to inform the United Nations that it would welcome “a balance among African contributors between French-speaking and English-speaking battalions, as this is a mission deployed in French-speaking countries.”⁴⁷⁸

Moreover, following Resolution 918, the word “genocide” was to take hold at the United Nations. On 25 May, the term was used in a resolution of the Commission on Human Rights adopted at the end of a session marked by the speech of the Minister Lucette Michaux-Chevry.⁴⁷⁹ The UN Secretary General sent his military adviser Maurice Baril and his representative Iqbal Riza on a special mission to Rwanda from 22 to 27 May, in order to bring the belligerents to a cease-fire and to “ascertain their views and intentions with regard to the implementation of Resolution 918.”⁴⁸⁰ But the RPF seized Kigali airport on 22 May and the truce negotiated for the arrival of the envoys was quickly broken, keeping them stranded in Uganda for several days.⁴⁸¹ The fifteen-page report of the General Secretariat, based on their conclusions, underlines the difficulty of the mission, exposes the conflicting views of the RPF and the interim government on the situation in Rwanda, states that “there is little doubt that genocide is taking place” and deplores “the belated reaction of the international community,” an attitude that “eloquently demonstrates that it is totally incapable of taking urgent and decisive action to deal with

humanitarian crises closely linked to an armed conflict”:

*In this regard, we must all recognize that we have failed to act to stop the agony in Rwanda and that, without saying a word, we have accepted that human beings continue to die. We have shown that our determination, our capacity to act, was at best insufficient and at worst disastrous, for lack of a collective political will. While we must address our weaknesses in the Rwanda crisis, we must also re-examine the entire system to strengthen its responsiveness.*⁴⁸²

The report also emphasizes a dramatic consequence of the “context of general instability”: population displacement. “The RPF-controlled zone [being] virtually empty,” the government zone is home to an estimated 1.5 million displaced persons who receive little humanitarian assistance. In addition, there are about 400,000 refugees in neighboring countries, representing “more than a quarter of the population of Rwanda”. “Consequently”, the Secretary-General said, “there is an urgent need to establish, as called for in Resolution 918 (1994), ‘safe humanitarian areas’ where the approximately 2 million unfortunate people who have been displaced can find security and assistance.”

On 8 June, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 925, which specified the deployment modalities of the reinforced UNAMIR and extended its mandate. For the first time, a Security Council resolution used the term “genocide,” rather than just its definition: the Council “notes with deepest concern reports that acts of genocide have been committed in Rwanda and recalls in this context that genocide is a crime under international law.”⁴⁸³ In his telegram presenting this resolution, Jean-Bernard Mérimée insisted on the mention of genocide, which was adopted “in spite of the reticence shown by China.”⁴⁸⁴ In his speech after the vote, the Deputy Permanent Representative of France, Hervé Ladsous, emphasized that “all the testimonies and the report of the Secretary-General are overwhelming on the extent of the humanitarian tragedy in Rwanda. The continuation of the massacres and of what has no other name than genocide is intolerable and those responsible must be judged.”⁴⁸⁵ If the word is now used, it should not be forgotten that Resolution 925 takes care to maintain a certain neutrality by requiring “all parties to the conflict” to agree to a ceasefire, to “put an end

to systematic massacres in the areas under their control” and to “immediately end all incitement to violence or ethnic hatred, in particular through the media.”⁴⁸⁶

This equivalence between the “parties to the conflict” also characterizes France’s regional policy at the same time.

4.4.3 France’s efforts with the states of the region (April-May 1994)

Between 1991 and 1993, French diplomacy focused on three aspects of the attempts to resolve the Rwandan conflict: promoting direct contacts between the Rwandan government and the RPF, particularly during early conversations in Paris in 1991; promoting the search for an agreement within a regional framework; and advising the Rwandan government. The assassination of the Rwandan and Burundian presidents, the ensuing coup d’état, the massacres of the moderate opposition, the genocide of the Tutsi and the resumption of fighting between the RPF and the FAR rendered these agreements de facto null and void. France therefore had to find new channels to try to promote peace in Rwanda while having fewer resources and a lesser capacity to act on events. From April to June 1994, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed the desire to revive the Arusha Accords, in particular by relying on the states in the region.

4.4.3.1 The impossible cease-fire and Ugandan-Zairian competition

The initiative for a meeting between the belligerents in the Rwandan conflict fell to the responsibility of the Tanzanian government on 19 April 1994.⁴⁸⁷ A meeting was called for Saturday, 23 April 1994 in Arusha. Tanzanian President Mwinyi decided to invite “a certain number of observer countries,” notably France. At the same time as the preparatory meetings for the meeting scheduled for 23 April by President Mwinyi,⁴⁸⁸ the informal facilitation group for the Arusha Accords (which includes representatives of the United States, Germany and France) met on 21 April, 1994 in Kampala. It received proposals from Ugandan President Museveni: ceasefire

with a 24-hour deadline, agreement to end the violence in the territories controlled by the various parties within 96 hours, verification by UNAMIR of the ceasefire and the cessation of massacres, the immediate opening of talks on the application of the Arusha Accords by the two parties, and the establishment of an international commission “to investigate the murders and massacres that took place before and after the death of the late President Habyarimana, as well as the circumstances of his death.”⁴⁸⁹ This meeting was the occasion for strong differences between the RPF and the Rwandan government: the RPF denied the legitimacy of the Rwandan government, as well as the fact that the massacres had been committed by “both parties”: “The massacres and the genocide were perpetrated by only one of the two parties.” The Rwandan ambassador to Uganda reaffirmed the authority of his government “to whom the armed forces obeyed,” stated that “reference to control of violence on both sides was necessary,” and affirmed that “an international investigation was acceptable.”⁴⁹⁰ Ambassador Descoueyte noted that “basically the text represents President Museveni’s view of a reasonable and acceptable agreement in Arusha.”

A few hours later, a text was finalized by the Rwandan ambassador in Kampala and the secretary general of the RPF, which was transmitted to their respective authorities for agreement: a cease-fire agreement within 24 hours; a 96-hour deadline to bring the violence under control in the territories under their respective control; and a request to UNAMIR to “verify both the cease-fire and the cessation of killings. The OAU and the countries of the region would consider how to contribute”; and the immediate opening of talks on the implementation of the Arusha agreements “subject to the implementation of paragraph 2”. Finally, point 5 states that “an international commission would be established to investigate the killings and massacres that took place before and after the death of the late President Habyarimana and the circumstances of his death.”⁴⁹¹ Catherine Boivineau, in a diplomatic telegram dated 22 April, 1992, emphasizes that President Mobutu “initially played a significant role as a mediator in the search for a solution to the Rwandan crisis [...] more recently, the Zairian president has taken the initiative of unofficial meetings with the Burundian and Rwandan presidents on the regional situation”. Catherine Boivineau therefore considered

“that Zaire’s presence at the Arusha meeting on 23 April was desirable” and asked the ambassador to Tanzania, Georges Rocchicioli, “to make sure with the Tanzanian authorities that Zaire has been invited to attend.”⁴⁹² A positive reply was sent to Paris a few hours later.⁴⁹³

The day of 23 April, 1994 seems paradoxical. Two cease-fires were declared unilaterally. The first was declared by the RPF:

*At the meeting that morning around President Museveni (Rwanda’s chargé d’affaires, the RPF secretary general, the Tanzanian chargé d’affaires, the American, British and French ambassadors), Mr. Rudasingwa, the RPF secretary general, made known the reaction of the Front commander to the draft agreement ad referendum between the Rwandan parties (cf TD Kampala 289). This consists of a unilateral ceasefire declaration, of which the OAU and the Tanzanian government have been informed, and which will be read out on the Front’s radio station (Radio Mubabura) at noon today.*⁴⁹⁴

In addition, a ceasefire was signed the same day in Gbadolite, Zaire, by two FAR generals: “For the Rwandan government, by delegation: Brigadier General Gatsinzi Marcel and Colonel Ntiwiragabo Aloys,” without the RPF representative, although he was mentioned, having signed it. During the meeting between Yoweri Museveni and the secretary general of the RPF, Theogene Rudasingwa

said that the RPF had received a message from President Mobutu inviting the Front to a meeting in Gbadolite that day, in conjunction with the Arusha meeting. The Front was seeking Museveni’s advice in this regard. President Museveni digressed to the time wasted in Africa discussing issues of place, form and people, rather than addressing issues of substance. The RPF could well send a delegation to each of the meetings. But there was a logistical problem: the plane to Gbadolite had just left, and the Ugandan government could only offer the RPF the use of the plane taking the Ugandan delegation to Arusha, led by Mr. Agard Didi, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

From this series of facts, several elements can be drawn: two unilateral cease-fires were decided. They were sponsored by two different heads of State⁴⁹⁵ and the response and the means provided by Museveni to the RPF delegation indicate that the path to be followed must be that of Arusha, not Gbadolite.⁴⁹⁶

The summit held in Arusha on 4 May, 1994 was a failure. In

the diplomatic telegram he wrote, Ambassador Marlaud indicated that “the RPF delegation left Arusha on the morning of 5 May without having signed a ceasefire agreement” despite the efforts of the Tanzanian facilitator to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion.⁴⁹⁷ While Ambassador Marlaud, at the end of his tour of the countries in the region on 13 May 1994, concluded that “the validity of the Arusha agreements should be reaffirmed” and stressed that France should affirm its support “for the principle of an investigation into human rights violations which should lead to sanctions, diplomatic efforts seem to be at a standstill.”⁴⁹⁸ The Kampala summit that was to be held on 24 May 1994 was cancelled. If for some African heads of State the schedule seemed too tight, François Descoueyte reports that dissension between the Zairian and Ugandan heads of State was the cause: “In reality, President Mobutu had insisted, once again, that the summit be held in Zaire. Mwinyi had agreed, and the venue would be Kisangani, but no date had been set [...] Finally, the ‘centerpiece,’ President Museveni, would be absent from 25 May to 4 June.”⁴⁹⁹ The French ambassador to Zaire shares his colleague’s idea: “From what Mr. Vunduawe [President Mobutu’s chief of staff] said, I get the impression that Zaire may not be a stranger to the postponement of the meeting that was scheduled for tomorrow.”⁵⁰⁰

4.4.3.2 FRANCE AND THE REINTRODUCTION OF ZAIRE INTO THE INTERNATIONAL GAME

France’s willingness to call on Zaire for an attempt at a regional settlement of the issue appeared as early as the end of April 1994. In a report of the interministerial meeting held on 25 April 1994, Bernard de Montferrand, adviser for diplomatic affairs in the Prime Minister’s office, indicates the purpose of the meeting: the possibilities for action “in terms of humanitarian aid.” While he noted that the Prime Minister’s office was in favor of relying “essentially on the role played by the OAU and the states of the region,” he recalled that “the President of the Republic emphasized that it would be unwise not to resume the dialogue with President Mobutu on this occasion and given the context.”⁵⁰¹ It was decided to invite our ambassador to Zaire “to request a meeting with President Mobutu.” On 29 April, the

French embassy in Kinshasa wrote to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

*The step prescribed by the reference TD was carried out on 29 April with the director of President Mobutu's cabinet. Mr. Vunduawe Te Pemako expressed President Mobutu's assent to our conception of the political settlement of the Rwandan crisis and emphasized Zaire's desire to become involved in a regional process. Concrete measures have already been taken [...] He also confirmed that President Mobutu, to whom a senior French official had just made a similar request by telephone, shared our analysis and was ready to become involved in the implementation of any conciliation process at the regional level.*⁵⁰²

It should be noted, however, that while the resumption of contact between Paris and Kinshasa is proven, communication between the different countries in the region is problematic. François Decoueyste, the French ambassador to Uganda, indicated on 29 April that “President Museveni was trying to contact Mobutu, but had never managed to reach him on the telephone” and suggested that France should pass on the message to the Zairian president.⁵⁰³

In the instructions given to Ambassador Marlaud, who left on a regional tour on 5 May, 1994, Jean-Marc de la Sablière recalled that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered Mobutu to be a “mediator in the political negotiations” and that France had intervened with Tanzania to “associate Zaire with the regional action”. The conclusion tries to combine precautionary advice and warnings: “We also expect President Mobutu to exert a moderating influence on the interim Rwandan government, to which he is close, and to ensure that no action likely to contribute to the continuation of the fighting is taken from his territory.”⁵⁰⁴

Other documents clarify the place of Zaire in French policy in Central and East Africa. A memo of 6 May, 1994, entitled “Regional character of the Rwandan conflict” clearly shows the role that must be assigned to Zaire: “Make sure that Zaire is well associated without being in the front line: the Western countries, in particular the United States and Great Britain, will not accept that the United Nations intervene in support of a compromise of which President Mobutu was the architect, and that he is thus comforted on the international level.”⁵⁰⁵ It is without doubt the memo by Nathalie Loiseau-Ducoulombier, technical advisor in Alain Juppé's cabinet, probably dated 9 May, 1994, that is the most enlightening. After emphasizing the importance of Zaire in

the evolution of the Rwandan crisis, based on past ties between Field Marshal Mobutu and President Habyarimana, as well as the role of arms sales by the former to the latter, she notes that “the Élysée and Matignon strongly insisted that our ambassador in Kinshasa go to Gbadolite to meet with the Zairian head of State and question him about his views on Rwanda. Several preliminary observations deserve to be made”. She recalls how “the role of President Mobutu in the current phase of the Rwandan conflict is unclear and in any case controversial” and dissuades sending the French ambassador to Gbadolite which “would not go unnoticed.” The ambassador maintains, in fact, “the line of no contact also applied by the Americans and the Belgians, and which was only broken by the President of the Republic at the Mauritius summit (and even then, in the presence of other heads of State).” Moreover, she reminds us that “the time has come to look for a prime minister [...] we would be accused of collusion with the Zairian president by the radical opposition, but also by the Belgians and the Americans, which would discredit the moderate opposition that we support.” The conclusion she makes is the following:

It is in fact nothing more and nothing less than a gesture in the direction of Mobutu, who is only waiting for this. This is really what Matignon and the Élysée have in mind, Rwanda being only a pretext. This reversal of our policy, if it were to be decided, would have to be carefully weighed and, at the present time, seems premature, even if it is true that, constitutionally, Mobutu has accepted concessions.

A threefold recommendation is provided: wait a week to see if a prime minister has been appointed, integrate this step into a more global approach with contacts between French ambassadors and Rwanda’s neighbors, and finally send a message to Mobutu: “incite him to restraint and to use his influence to push the protagonists to peace.”⁵⁰⁶

4.5 THE GENESIS OF TURQUOISE, BETWEEN CRITICISM OF PREVIOUS FRENCH POLICY AND SOCIAL DEMAND FOR INTERVENTION

From mid-May onwards, the scale of the massacres perpetrated in Rwanda

and the existence of genocide against the Tutsi were the subject of public denunciations and official international reports. National and international public opinion is increasingly shaken by the “horrific images”⁵⁰⁷ they see on television.

4.5.1 *Mobilization of intellectuals and NGOs, an accusatory press*

On the French side, intellectuals, humanitarians and NGOs mobilized. While the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the rare foreign presence remaining in Rwanda apart from 270 military personnel (Ghanaians and Bengalis) of UNAMIR, and Human Rights Watch (HRW) quickly identified “the massacre of the Tutsi as genocide,”⁵⁰⁸ a group of French Africanists and academics launched an “Appeal for the immediate cessation of the genocide in Rwanda and support for the democratic movement” at the end of April. The collective is mentioned in a short memo from the *Service Central des Renseignements Généraux* on 2 May.⁵⁰⁹ Its text, which names the executioners but does not totally exonerate the RPF,⁵¹⁰ denounces the abandonment of the international community, which “evacuated, on the sly, the expatriates, and them alone,” as well as “those who use ethnic hatred to maintain or gain power”. Refusing to “consider Africa only as a lost continent prey to war, massacres and famine,” it urges the European Union and the French government to condemn “the massacres committed by the various protagonists on innocent civilian populations and in particular the genocide committed by the Presidential Guard and the militias of the former single party,” to put pressure on their actors to stop the massacres, to have the UN adopt a resolution enlarging the mandate of the UNAMIR: creation of “humanitarian and security zones to ensure the protection of civilians threatened by massacres in the south of the country,” deployment of “groups of observers in the rest of the country to ensure respect for human rights and the prevention of acts of vengeance.” It also calls for the convening of an international conference in a neutral country to reach a peaceful settlement “on the basis of the Arusha Accords” and the creation of an international tribunal to judge the guilty parties.⁵¹¹

Also distributed under the title “Appeal to stop the massacres in

Rwanda,” the first signatories - 3,000 by mid-May - were Marc Augé, President of the EHESS, Bishop Gaillot of Évreux, Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel, Laurent Schwartz, member of the Institute, Jacques Pelletier, President of the French Committee for International Solidarity and former Minister of Cooperation, and Bernard Kouchner, former Minister of Health and Humanitarian Action. Shortly thereafter, the latter failed in Kigali to negotiate the evacuation of orphans and returned to France “disillusioned” in the words of Bruno Delaye, Africa advisor at the Elysée Palace,⁵¹² although his trip marked, according to a caustic journalist, the beginning of “a flood of reports” with “CNN, Time’s coverage and the accusations [...] on the 8 o’clock news.”⁵¹³ The French press, including regional dailies, used accusatory headlines: “Rwanda: Paris directly involved in the tragedy” (*L’Humanité*, 17 May 1994); “France caught in the trap of its agreements” (*Libération*, 18 May 1994); “Rwanda, the missteps of France” (*Le Figaro*, 19 May 1994); “The massacres were predictable since 1993. Rwanda: we knew” (*Ouest-France*, May 24, 1994).⁵¹⁴

Present on the ground since the beginning of the crisis and “witnessing multiple atrocities,” *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) launched a press campaign for an “external intervention” capable of “imposing an immediate halt to the massacres,” and the international community had to, in its words, “stop hiding behind the humanitarian flag once again.” In warning the Élysée Palace, the NGO published an open letter to the President of the Republic on 16 May, stating that France had “an overwhelming responsibility for the shameful events that have been taking place in Rwanda since 6 April.” Dr. Biberson, President of MSF, who put the number of deaths at 200,000 and the number of people fleeing the country at 350,000, reminded François Mitterrand that “this is not an ethnic war, but the systematic and programmed extermination of opponents of a faction supported and armed by France,” and asked three questions: “How can we not talk about a crime against humanity? How can we imagine that France has no means with its ‘protégés’ to stop these massacres? How can we understand your overly diplomatic remarks during your recent televised appearance, claiming that ‘our soldiers cannot become the arbiters of passions that are tearing so many countries apart?’”⁵¹⁵ The same accusing words were repeated that evening on TF1 by Jean-Hervé

Bradol, head of programs at MSF, who had just returned from Rwanda. The report, which shows a camp in the bishopric of Kabgayi as well as Bernard Kouchner caught in a firefight against a UN convoy, and the interview by Patrick Poivre d'Arvor last together twenty minutes, i.e., a large part of the television news. J.-H. Bradol protests against all those who describe the Rwandans "as tribes massacring each other" and tries to make the French understand, at prime time, what is really happening in Kigali, which is, as P. Poivre d'Arvor concludes, "a real genocide":

For a month, the city of Kigali has been completely cordoned off, the houses are searched one by one to extract the part of the population that is suspected of being hostile to the most extremist current of the army; and there, the people who are suspected of this hostility are executed with their families, that is to say that the execution means babies, women, old people, absolutely everyone! There is not a single survivor. And when we went back to the neighborhoods to pick up the wounded, the militiamen would boast, saying "there's no one left to pick up, we killed everyone!" And that's what they do. And this policy is really a policy, we can speak of a policy, it is a deliberate, systematic, planned policy of extermination.⁵¹⁶

Three days later (19 May), Bruno Delaye, who had received Biberson and Bradol, no doubt at the request of a disgruntled president, minimized the scope of the accusation and reassured François Mitterrand by writing that he had explained French policy to them at length, that the latter "recognized the positive role played by France from 1990 to 1994 and seemed to share, at least in part, our analysis of the responsibilities of all parties, in particular the RPF, in this tragedy,"⁵¹⁷ and that they were equally critical of the international community and the United Nations.⁵¹⁸ On the same day, however, the large group of associations *Solidarités Rwanda* published a press release that emphasized the "double requirement" of "naming the genocide and not continuing to act as if there were no perpetrators." To the French authorities who "persist in trivializing the conflict", it asks for a "political clarification": official denunciation of the genocide, condemnation of those responsible, suspension of military cooperation agreements with Rwanda and respect for the embargo on arms deliveries, "support for indispensable humanitarian operations." It also asks France to reserve its diplomatic contacts "solely for political representatives

legitimized by the Arusha Accords, in particular Mr. Faustin Twagiramungu, the Prime Minister.”⁵¹⁹

Was the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alain Juppé, informed, before the launch of the press campaign, of MSF’s unease and accusations? In any case, between the end of April and mid-May, his office received four letters from the association *Enfants du Rwanda* asking the Minister to stop the “killings”⁵²⁰ and describing the displaced populations who felt trapped by the RPF and the threatening militias.⁵²¹ On 13 May, he also received a statement from the Brussels-based *Coordination Committee of Democratic Forces for Change in Rwanda*, which includes representatives of various opposition parties and is supported by Faustin Twagiramungu. Signed by the man who had been designated to be the first minister of the BBTG, the declaration condemned the attack and the accusations against Belgium, denounced “the plan of extermination prepared, orchestrated and executed by the MRND and CDR parties against the leaders of the opposition parties, including Ms. Agathe Uwilingiyimana”.⁵²² It emphasizes that these parties “relied on the Presidential Guard, extremist elements of the national army and gendarmerie, as well as their Interahamwe-Impuzamugambi militia” and that “this diabolical undertaking has already cost the lives of more than 250,000 of our fellow citizens as well as many nationals of several friendly countries.”⁵²³ Without using the term genocide, this forceful statement calls on “friendly governments” to help build the planned institutions, to obtain the expansion of UNAMIR’s mandate to stop the massacres, and to create safe zones and humanitarian corridors. Alain Juppé may also have taken note of the 13 May memo written by the French ambassador in Kigali, who was sent on a mission to evaluate and make contacts in Rwanda’s neighboring countries, with heads of State, the “Rwandan parties” and NGOs. In this memo, Jean-Michel Marlaud reported on the scale of the massacres in the government zone, adding that they were “qualified by some as genocide.”⁵²⁴

4.5.2 16 May, a turning point?

In any case, Alain Juppé was the first

French politician to use the term “genocide” in the press briefing that followed a European Council of Ministers meeting on Rwanda in Brussels on 16 May, stressing that “the massacres are appalling, mainly in the zone held by government forces”. The term is also present in the declaration made on the same day by the European Union. It was used again in the National Assembly two days later by Charles Millon, a UDF member of parliament, who, in a question session to the government, denounced the “indifference” of the “Western world,” emphasized that “the French exception is also and above all the ability to take up the moral and spiritual challenges that are being thrown at us,” and asked the Prime Minister what decisions he intended to take and to have the international community take. The reply, which was not from Édouard Balladur but from Alain Juppé, reiterated that the term “systematic elimination of the Tutsi population” was indeed applicable. It also stated that France supported the efforts of the states in the region to obtain a cease-fire and to resume the Arusha process, that it had requested an international investigation by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and that it had worked “very hard” in New York to have Resolution 918 adopted by the Security Council the day before (17 May), which expanded the mandate of UNAMIR and increased its strength to 5,500 men.”⁵²⁵

For his part, Édouard Balladur, who had received a copy of the accusatory letter from MSF, asked the government to prepare a presentation on France’s past action in Rwanda.⁵²⁶ He also had a press release on Rwanda prepared and submitted to the Élysée Palace on the evening of 17 May.⁵²⁷ This press release does not speak of genocide but of “a real tragedy” where the victims are counted “in the hundreds of thousands.” It enjoined “the Rwandan parties, in particular the interim government,” thus designated as the main perpetrator, to condemn the massacres and to put an end to them. He welcomed the resolution adopted at the UN and specified that France was “ready to examine a contribution to the equipment of African contingents called upon to participate in the reinforced UNAMIR.” He stressed the importance of the humanitarian aid granted since “the beginning of the Rwandan crisis” - 20 million francs - and announced that it would be increased in the direction of the “refugee” camps⁵²⁸ in Burundi (medical aid) and Tanzania (water purification), as well as to the NGOs working in

Rwanda.⁵²⁹ Thus, the Prime Minister, whom a recent memo by Bruno Delaye described as having little interest in Africa,⁵³⁰ also believes, as reported by General Quesnot, that “we cannot remain absent from Rwanda”⁵³¹ and he asks the government “to make proposals to him in this regard.”⁵³² For the time being, even if direct French participation in the reinforced UNAMIR was envisaged and its risks evoked during the brief discussions of the core cabinet meeting of 18 May,⁵³³ it was only a question of humanitarian aid and logistical assistance to the future Senegalese contingent, as confirmed in the weekly update on Africa written the following week by Bruno Delaye.⁵³⁴ Humanitarian aid was deliberately “publicized,” especially during the visit of the Minister of Health, Philippe Douste-Blazy, around May 20 to the camps in Burundi and Tanzania, with a memo from General Quesnot dated 24 May specifying that the government “wants to make it even more visible.”⁵³⁵ In this way, the French were increasingly informed of what was happening in Rwanda, but the images of the misery of the displaced people, who flocked to the camps on the borders of Rwanda, did not always allow them to understand what was going on and to identify the victims and the perpetrators.

Some NGOs also publicize their actions in the field. Bernard Granjon, president of *Médecins du Monde* (MDM), arrived in Kampala on May 24 with four members of his association, a representative of *Juristes sans frontières* and six journalists. Until 29 May, he will visit the RPF-controlled zone in northern Rwanda, where his association “is already firmly established”. As stated in a diplomatic telegram from the French ambassador in Kampala and in a memo from Dominique Pin to François Mitterrand, he made it known “that his goal was to proceed with an evaluation not only of the humanitarian situation, but of French policy in Rwanda”. The chargé de mission advised the President to receive Granjon on his return - he was unable to do so before his departure - because “the NGOs, shocked by the scale of the massacres, made hasty and unfair judgments about the policy followed by France in Rwanda, and the media complacently relayed their criticism.”⁵³⁶ For his part, Bruno Delaye received a fax on 19 May from the French embassy in Washington of a letter, dated that day, from Human Rights Watch/Africa, which welcomed the Security Council resolution, reproached the United States for slowing down its

implementation, alerted to the situation of the people held hostage at the Cyangugu stadium and then transferred to the Nyarushishi camp, and asked President François Mitterrand and his Africa advisor to use their power to protect them.⁵³⁷ He does not seem to have mentioned this to the President of the Republic, any more than he reported on the report received in January 1994 on the arms trade - identifying France as “the main military ally of the Rwandan government”⁵³⁸ - or on the letter from the director of the organization dated 26 April ordering pressure to be put on the IRG delegation about to be received in Paris to stop “the genocide campaign.”⁵³⁹ Perhaps a sign of distrust of the presidency, which has still not recognized genocide, there is no trace in the Élysée archives of a letter identical to the one that the NGO Liaison Committee for Development to the European Communities sent to Alain Juppé on 26 May. This committee asked for rapid aid for Rwanda and, referring to the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, signed by Rwanda in 1975, wanted the various states to exert pressure to “put an end to public and direct incitement to genocide, including, if necessary, by taking control of radio stations.”⁵⁴⁰

For months, and particularly since her visit to Rwanda on 27 and 28 January, 1994, Lucette Michaux-Chevry, Minister Delegate for Humanitarian Action and Human Rights, has been aware of the risks of famine and mobilized to provide aid to displaced persons and NGOs working in Rwanda.⁵⁴¹ On 24 and 25 May, she was in Geneva, with Ambassador Jean-Michel Marlaud, at the special session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. During the preparatory work, France insisted that the term “genocide” be included in the resolution and showed a certain retreat in its support for the IRG, while moderating its language: it asked that the condemnation of the army not be generalized, but that “elements” be cited, and that the militias be presented as “close” to the government rather than “loyal,” thus exonerating itself from any complicity with those responsible for the massacres.⁵⁴² Bruno Delaye did not write a memo on these negotiations. In his weekly update of 24 May, he mentions the Geneva meeting, specifying that the Minister’s speech had not been transmitted to the Élysée, but that “it should condemn the genocide, emphasizing that it was perpetrated essentially by government

forces, and ask for the constitution of an international tribunal to judge those responsible for the massacres”.⁵⁴³

The minister mentions the “massacres of Tutsi and Hutu close to the opposition” in the aftermath of the 6 April attack, and notes that “the massacres quickly took on an appalling scale. The testimonies in this regard are damning for the militias. Their systematic nature gives them a name whose legal consequences I fully understand as I pronounce it: GENOCIDE.”⁵⁴⁴ The minister points to the responsibility of the interim government for the massacres, and immediately points to the responsibility of the RPF for the “abuses” committed in its zone:

*Why doesn't the interim government condemn all these massacres with all due vigor? Is it doing everything in its power to ensure that the perpetrators of these massacres put an end to them without delay? Why does the RPF not react to the abuses reported in the area it controls? Indeed, testimonies indicate that serious violations of humanitarian law and human rights are occurring in this zone, where new abuses have reportedly occurred recently.*⁵⁴⁵

It is therefore, as the French permanent representative to the United Nations Office in Geneva, Michel de Bonnecorse, reports, that L. Michaux-Chevry proceeded to a “solemn and balanced condemnation of those responsible for the massacres.”⁵⁴⁶ According to the French representative in Geneva, “the presence of the Minister and the content of her speech had a very positive effect and contributed to avoiding any accusations against our policy in Rwanda, including from NGOs.”⁵⁴⁷ The next day, the Commission declared that “acts amounting to genocide are likely to have occurred in Rwanda” and appointed a special rapporteur to investigate, the Ivorian Degni-Ségui.⁵⁴⁸ On the ground in Rwanda, the United Nations succeeded in organizing discussions between the Rwandan army and the RPF at the end of May to evacuate civilians from the capital, but failed to obtain a cease-fire. At the Élysée, Bruno Delaye blamed the RPF, which “obviously wants to continue the fighting until the FAR is totally defeated and then impose its political solution.”⁵⁴⁹ “There is therefore little to expect from the resumption of talks on 2 June,” he adds. The fear of a destabilization of “the whole region, which could experience an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe” is expressed repeatedly, notably by General Quesnot.⁵⁵⁰

On 2 June, in anticipation of a special session of the Economic and Social Council, the Quai d'Orsay insisted that the European Union declaration use "the term genocide or the expression 'acts of genocide'". It is also appropriate that "the Rwandan authorities should be called upon to publicly condemn the abuses committed by the militias and elements of the armed forces and the Presidential Guard, and to take the necessary measures to put an end to them". For good measure, and in keeping with the concern for balance already displayed by Minister Michaux-Chevry in Geneva, the Department also states that it calls on the RPF "to prevent any violations of human rights and humanitarian law in the areas under its control."⁵⁵¹

4.5.3 *Social demand becomes more pressing*

During the first half of June, protests multiplied in France. Appeals and press releases⁵⁵² were classified by the Élysée's Africa Unit under the following headings: "Doctors take a stand,"⁵⁵³ "Churches mobilize,"⁵⁵⁴ "Civil society organizes," and "Points de repère," which contained press articles and leaflets written by the *Survie* association. The press, with its increasingly accusatory statements against French policy in Rwanda since 1990, was closely observed, not only the French press but also the foreign press, as reported in ambassadors' telegrams, with the daily *Le Soir* in Brussels being particularly virulent. A leaflet in the folder "Points de repère" contains on the one hand a meeting by Jean Carbonare in the last May issue of *L'Humanité dimanche* (n° 219) and on the other hand a collage of accusatory headlines. Among the other articles that have been preserved, and often annotated or with underlined sentences, is one by the Africanist Jean-François Bayart in *Le Nouvel Observateur* of 2-8 June, inserted in the Document pages devoted to "the most hallucinating massacre of the last half-century." Entitled "The Roots of Hatred," he denounces "dictators threatened by a democratic demand, who practice a strategy of ethnic tension to remain in power." He also accuses France, which is caught up in a "spiral" and which "could at least have exchanged its support for the regime for the neutralization of the Zero Network and the end of the strategy of ethnic cleansing".

As suggested by a memo addressed to Hubert Védrine with a few articles described as “the fruit of patient and painstaking work of explanation with certain specialized journalists,” Bruno Delaye tried to obtain more positive assessments, notably in *Jeune Afrique* and *La Lettre d’Afrique centrale*.⁵⁵⁵ In a memo dated 10 June, he lists and sends the three documents on which to base his response to the accusations: François Mitterrand’s letter to Habyarimana of 30 January, 1991, “which clearly sets out the conditions for French intervention and asks the Rwandan president to open a dialogue with all the components of the nation, the advent of a state of law respectful of human rights, and the settlement of the refugee question”; the letter from the President of the RPF, dated 17 September, 1993, “thanking France for its role in the Arusha negotiations”; and finally the letter from Mitterrand to Bill Clinton dated 27 September, 1993, asking him to support the creation and rapid deployment of a United Nations force in Rwanda. These three documents were to form, a few days later - on 18 June - the framework of the long communiqué issued by the Élysée in response to the converging attacks of the previous day: a statement to AFP by Daniel Jacoby, president of the FIDH, accusing France of having conducted “a questionable and even detestable policy” in Rwanda; and the words of Jean Carbonare, a member of the commission of inquiry of January 1993 and president of the Survie association, reported in *Le Figaro* by Patrick de Saint-Exupéry under the title: “The Élysée knew....” “The personal and violent implication of the President,” accused of criminal association, alerted Jean Musitelli, spokesman for the Élysée, as well as Hubert Védrine who, in forwarding the article, requested a very urgent reading from François Mitterrand and specified: “Jean Musitelli thinks that a detailed clarification in a press release is necessary, even if Bruno Delaye considers that this Mr. Carbonare, whom he knows, is an agitated person. Would you like us to prepare a draft communiqué for you? “Yes, very explicit,” replied François Mitterrand.⁵⁵⁶ The Secretary General of the Élysée also sent a short letter of protest to Daniel Jacoby, which ended with the following remark: “The purpose of your organization is to work in favor of human rights. We can only congratulate you on this, but among human rights, there is also the right to fair and just information.”⁵⁵⁷

During the first two weeks of June, NGOs also mobilized and put pressure on the authorities. *Action internationale contre la faim* (AICF), whose director Jean-Fabrice Piétri had reported on the massacres in *Le Monde* on 27 April, launched an appeal on 31 May and in its journal *Interventions* (No. 35, April-June 1994) denounced the genocide of Bosnian Muslims and Tutsi on its front page.⁵⁵⁸ As expected, Bernard Granjon was received on 3 June by François Mitterrand, a few days after his return from Rwanda, from where he wanted to evacuate some fifty seriously wounded children.⁵⁵⁹ In a preparatory memo for the meeting, Bruno Delaye mentions the effective propaganda of the RPF, which “has been able to play on the emotion felt in the face of horror to present itself as an army of liberation, despite the hundreds of thousands of people (more than one million according to the Red Cross) who are fleeing it”⁵⁶⁰ and again specifies the importance of French humanitarian aid, which has amounted to 32 million francs since 6 April. Philippe Biberson of MSF, who was also invited, was not available on that date. He expresses his thanks and emphasizes that his message was the same as that of MDM, specifying: “What we are particularly concerned about today is the possibility of launching large-scale relief operations in the absence of prosecution of those responsible for the massacres.”⁵⁶¹

In contrast, parliamentarians remained relatively quiet for a long time and did not seem to take the measure of what was happening in Rwanda. In the National Assembly, during this period, only one written question and one oral question to the government mentioned the situation and cautiously asked what France intended to do. On 30 May, the UDF deputy Gilles de Robien tabled a written question in which, after criticizing the shameful attitude of the UN and judging Resolution 918 to be too restrictive, he asked what initiatives France intended to take and “whether the interim government of Rwanda, which is radically opposed to the Arusha Accords, is still a possible partner.”⁵⁶² Like all written questions, this one, which may suggest the need for intervention, did not receive an immediate response, unlike the question to the government put on 1 June by the Socialist Michel Fromet. The latter denounced “the extremist Hutu majority” which aspired “to absolute power” and, considering that the Arusha Accords were “the only credible political solution for establishing peace,” asked what action France could take to

bring the belligerents to negotiation. In his response, Alain Juppé, less incisive than in his speech on 16 May, condemned “the massacres that have been perpetrated on both sides, starting with those committed by the militias that have acted in areas controlled by government forces”; he also presented the four axes of France’s action: relieving the suffering, promoting the establishment of the UN force, obtaining a cease-fire, “recovering the Arusha line,” and relying on the moderates by muzzling “the extremists who are responsible for this unprecedented genocide in Africa.”⁵⁶³ There was no question of intervening in Rwanda yet.

The senators are more discreet about the Rwandan reality. There was no mention of the massacres in the Senate until 26 May. The written question of the RPR parliamentarian Emmanuel Hamel on France’s action to re-establish civil peace and “the survival of the Hutu and Tutsi populations that had not yet been massacred” spoke of “the atrocities of the civil war [...] whose victims numbered in the hundreds of thousands.”⁵⁶⁴ On the same day, however, Jacques Legendre, rapporteur for the Cultural Affairs Commission on the Use of the French Language bill, regretted “the silence of the community of French-speaking states,” adding, without specifying the nature of the initiative to be taken: “It would have been understandable if, faced with such a terrible genocide, [this community] had taken a joint initiative.”⁵⁶⁵ On 15 June, when the decision had just been taken in the core cabinet meeting,⁵⁶⁶ the discussion of the draft military programming law allowed the Communists to denounce “the expeditionary drift” and “our pitiful military adventures in Zaire, the Central African Republic, Togo, Rwanda, Burundi, Chad and Gabon,” and François Léotard to reply: “Is it an expeditionary drift to go today to Rwanda to look for orphans or children who are being massacred?”⁵⁶⁷ The next day, the fate of orphans was also highlighted in a question on current affairs put by the senator for the Var, René-Georges Laurin (RPR). In order to account for what he called “a horrible tragedy,” “a genocide,” the expression of a “murderous madness,” and which he saw as “fighting between Tutsi and Hutu,” he referred to “the assassination, on 7 June, of the Archbishop of Kigali, of the President of the Bishops’ Conference of Byumba, as well as ten priests who, in the eyes of the rebels, symbolized order, charity and peace.”⁵⁶⁸ He then evokes, without mentioning the perpetrators of the crime, the

moving testimony of a White Father returning from Kigali about the abduction and massacre, on June 10, of two hundred people who had taken refuge in his parish, including many orphans. Referring to the fiftieth anniversary of the Liberation and the “fallacious alibis that were put forward by Vichy, and even by the Vatican, to justify non-intervention in the face of Nazi crimes,”⁵⁶⁹ he called for “an end to the horror.”

The idea of a French intervention had indeed gained ground, reinforced by the media coverage of the 10 June massacre of 170 Tutsi children in the orphanage of Father Blanchard in Kigali. It was taken to the level of the State by Alain Juppé, who repeated during press briefings the need for the international community to take “new initiatives” because “we cannot continue to allow such an abominable genocide to be perpetrated.”⁵⁷⁰ His commitment was emphasized at the Élysée by Bruno Delaye in his weekly update on Africa on 14 June and by General Quesnot, who wrote, with Dominique Pin, a memo in preparation for the President’s meeting with the Prime Minister and the core cabinet meeting of 15 June.⁵⁷¹ Alain Juppé, who “found the immobility of Western and African nations in the face of the Rwandan tragedy scandalous” and “intolerable” the late deployment of UNAMIR reinforcements, suggested to the UN Secretary-General, who was in Paris and with whom he had a telephone meeting, that part of the UN forces in Somalia (UNOSOM) should be transferred immediately to Rwanda to “bridge the gap” before the arrival of the African contingents of UNAMIR. He obtained from Matignon the release of 20 million francs to rapidly finance equipment for the Senegalese contingent and proposed to Edouard Balladur “to study the possibility of a Franco-European-African air-land intervention in order to save the massacred children and stop the fighting.” The memo also states, and the sentence is underlined, that “Mr. Balladur has asked that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs discreetly talk to our partners and that Defense study the technical feasibility of such an operation. He intends to talk to you about this during your meeting, because he believes that we cannot remain inactive on this issue.”⁵⁷²

For a long time more reserved about an intervention of this type and calling on the United Nations to assume its responsibilities, François Mitterrand did not mention the genocide in progress in his speech of 10 June

at Oradour-sur-Glane, where he nevertheless expressed the wish for “a world where Oradours will no longer be possible.” His support for French action seems to be the result of a conversation with Agathe Habyarimana, whose extremism horrifies him, and of a new meeting with MSF, whose president, “traumatized by the latest events in Kigali [...] and concerned for the safety of MSF staff,” asked on 13 June to be received very quickly. The preparatory memo for the meeting, which took place the next day, emphasized two important elements of the international context: the fragile hope that a cease-fire would be signed by the belligerents on the sidelines of the OAU Summit in Tunis (13-15 June); the fact that “things are dragging on in New York,” as the reinforced UNAMIR could not be deployed within a short timeframe.⁵⁷³ An AFP dispatch of 14 June headlined: “*Médecins sans frontières* exposes its concern about Rwanda to President Mitterrand.” The NGO prepared a public appeal to the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the deputies. Published in *Le Monde* on 17 June and sent to donors with a petition to sign, this appeal includes the word “genocide” three times, in large and bold letters, and emphasizes that “genocide calls for a radical, immediate response” and not just humanitarian aid: “You can’t stop genocide with doctors!” Ambiguous, the text certainly calls on the French authorities to support an immediate intervention by the United Nations, but by emphasizing the urgency and invoking their power of action, it seems to legitimize a French intervention.⁵⁷⁴ An AFP dispatch of 17 June headlined: “The humanitarian association MSF asks for an armed intervention in Rwanda.”⁵⁷⁵ In the meantime, faxes of the following letter, written on 14 or 15 June, arrived at the Élysée, variants of which questioned both the President and the government:

The dramatic situation in Rwanda and in the refugee camps justifies that France act today to protect the populations.

Military contingents, medicine and food must be sent urgently.

*We demand that the President assume his responsibilities.*⁵⁷⁶

Like the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Cooperation, Foreign Affairs, Humanitarian Action, Social Affairs, Defense and Culture, the Presidents of the National Assembly and the Senate, the representatives of the various parliamentary groups and the press agencies, the Élysée’s services also received a fax on 14 June

from Jean-Michel Yung, who was centralizing the signatures of the Appeal for the Immediate Halt of the Genocide in Rwanda and Support for Democratic Movements, and regularly sent out the list of signatories. The letter accompanying the ninth mailing mentions “nearly 5,000 signatures” - there were 4,975 to be exact - which, as the professions indicate, now come from a broad civil society.⁵⁷⁷ The letter ends with the following paragraph that mentions in particular the situation in Kigali:

*Let us emphasize that it is a matter of immediate urgency to protect the refugees of the Hotel des Mille Collines, the Fayçal Hospital, the Church of the Holy Family, and to save the countless victims of the genocide and the massacres underway, especially in Butare. This protection involves, among other things, effective security for convoys during transfers by UNAMIR and the issuance of visas at consular posts in the region or upon arrival at French airports.*⁵⁷⁸

The outbreak and continuation of the genocide from April to mid-June 1994 tragically testifies to the blindness of the international community and of France. After having largely ignored the process of radicalization that was to lead to the genocide, the French authorities remained obsessed with the threat of the RPF, an attitude that was particularly pronounced among military analysts, notably the chief of the presidential private staff. The attack on the presidential plane was initially attributed to the “rebels” despite the lack of evidence. This crime remains an enigma, despite repeated requests by France to open an international investigation.

The hasty evacuation of French nationals was prompted by the murder, attributed to the RPF, of two French gendarmes and the wife of one of them. Operation Amaryllis was carried out with great efficiency and aimed, in accordance with international law, to evacuate French and foreign nationals. It ignored the massacres that were beginning, although this blindness was quickly disrupted by the investigations and media coverage. At the same time, the massacres of civilians continued under the eyes of the French military, who did not intervene. The Habyarimana family, on the other hand, received special attention. The departure of French forces and diplomatic presence, precipitated by the rapid advance of the RPF on Kigali, was followed, with France’s consent, by

a brutal disengagement of the United Nations, which left the field open for the genocide to develop⁵⁷⁹.

The first analyses of the French authorities and their initial reactions to the violence saw the methodical massacres of Tutsi as a new manifestation of traditional inter-ethnic conflicts. At the end of April, however, some French political and diplomatic actors pointed out the differences in nature and magnitude between the systematic massacres perpetrated against the Tutsi and the reprisal massacres in the areas conquered by the RPF. Despite its repeated requests, France did not provide military support to the Rwandan interim government. But it persists in perceiving only a situation of war between two parties, which leads it simply to ask for a cease-fire and to promote political negotiations. French politicians cling to the Arusha Accords, which have clearly become unworkable.

While the term “genocide” was eventually used by the Minister of Foreign Affairs on 16 May, and then in a 8 June resolution at the United Nations, it was always accompanied by a “balanced condemnation” of the abuses committed by Hutu extremists on the one hand, and the RPF on the other. The massive population displacements and the tragedies they caused were superimposed on the genocide to form a single global humanitarian catastrophe against which France became more active from mid-May onwards, particularly at the United Nations. In the weeks that followed, increasingly severe accusations were made against France’s policy in Rwanda, and a request for intervention, whose contours remained vague, came from civil society. In this context, and faced with the inaction of the Western powers, Paris asked the Security Council for a green light to return to Rwanda. The French initiative was widely welcomed, even if it appeared to be a late “catching up.” This new intervention became known as Operation Turquoise.

Chapter 5

Operation Turquoise (22 June - 21 August, 1994)

The political decision to intervene in Rwanda, which had matured in the context presented in the previous chapter, was taken in a core cabinet meeting on 15 June, with François Mitterrand declaring that he was responsible for it.¹ On 18 June, 1994, the Élysée and Matignon issued the following joint press release announcing Operation Turquoise:

France would like to see an international operation set up in Rwanda with a humanitarian aim, intended to save human lives and put an end to the massacres being perpetrated in that country.

To this end, it is making all necessary diplomatic contacts. It has decided to send the necessary resources to Rwanda's borders. These forces, together with those of the African and Western countries that will join them, will assume their missions until UNAMIR is able to fulfill the mandate entrusted to it by the Security Council.

This operation, whose purpose is strictly humanitarian, will be carried out on the basis of a mandate to be requested from the United Nations and in liaison with all international organizations and interested parties.

This press release, of which Hubert Védrine's archives preserve an earlier amended version,² defines the nature and objective of the planned operation: a temporary humanitarian operation under a UN mandate. It suggests that the French authorities were then engaged in a vast diplomatic offensive to gain acceptance for the operation. Finally, it specified that the French soldiers involved in the operation would soon be deployed at the borders of Rwanda, before the UN mandate was obtained, which did not occur until 22 June (vote on Resolution 929). They left the country on 21 August after two months of intense activity that was widely publicized in the media.

This chapter analyzes Operation Turquoise,

not so much by relying on a very prolix press³ as by cross-referencing a large number of political, diplomatic and military sources, including photographs and films kept by the ECPAD.⁴ It pays close attention to the diversity of actors, both national and international, as well as to the chronology of the operation, in which two distinct periods emerge: the first, from the political decision to intervene in Rwanda to the realization of the need to create a Safe Humanitarian Zone (SHZ); the second, from the creation of the SHZ to the disengagement of French troops. For each of these two periods, the political decision, the diplomatic action and the military development of the operation on the ground are analyzed in turn. The troops deployed were not prepared for the terrible realities they encountered in Rwanda and may have been deeply traumatized by them. Their leaders followed orders from Paris but had to constantly adapt them, thus placing them in a context of uncertainty.

5.I. THE POLITICAL DECISION TO INTERVENE: A “STRICTLY HUMANITARIAN” OPERATION?

Was Turquoise, in the words of the 18 June press release and subsequent public statements, a “strictly humanitarian” operation, or did it have other hidden motives, as its critics claim? An analysis of the three core cabinet meetings of 15, 22 and 29 June⁵ - and their preparatory memos or those specifying the modalities for the implementation of the operation - as well as that of the interministerial meetings or the crisis unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the second half of June, allow us to answer this question in part and to highlight an evolution in the objectives discussed within the executive branch. They also show how the respective positions of the President of the Republic and the ministers of the government are articulated in decision-making during a period of cohabitation. In this way, the period, in which tensions over the perimeters of each party’s competences are expressed, is a good observatory of the functioning of the institutions of the Fifth Republic.

5.1.1 A moral duty, a limited operation (15 June)

At the core cabinet meeting of 15 June, devoted to Rwanda, the question of the measures to be taken urgently was raised and opinions were divided on the appropriateness of intervening. There was no denunciation of the genocide of the Tutsi that had been going on for more than two months. The Minister of Cooperation, who was the first to speak after the President, even stated, perhaps moved, like several members of parliament, by the RPF's assassination of some fifteen clerics, including the Bishop of Kigali, that "the massacres are continuing on both the Hutu and Tutsi sides."⁶ The Minister of Defense said he was "reluctant" to any intervention that could only be carried out "in Hutu areas" and would be condemned by the RPF and the media, requiring in addition "heavy means."⁷ The Minister of Foreign Affairs reported on the operation under review by his ministry with NGOs to evacuate 200 to 300 children within 48 hours⁸ and declared himself in favor of "a more muscular intervention if UNAMIR is slow to deploy." The most interventionist are the Prime Minister and the President of the Republic, in the name of France's moral duty not to remain inactive. As Édouard Balladur said, with the approval of Mitterrand, who invoked "the honor of France": "We can no longer, whatever the risks, remain inactive. For moral reasons and not for media reasons [...] In such terrible cases, one must know how to take risks."

The type of operation decided upon that day, and for which François Mitterrand said he "assumed responsibility," was indeed a humanitarian operation. Its objectives are limited to "the protection of certain sites, hospitals or schools," including two or three in Kigali, with either a guard at these sites or return trips. In other words, it is a question of "a rapid and targeted intervention, but not a generalized action," which would consequently only mobilize "a few hundred men," the president considering, moreover, that "both sides" are not "aggressive towards the Europeans" and that "Museveni will be reasonable." Concerning how to reach the site, the Armed Forces Chief of Staff (CEMA), who emphasized from the outset that "the Kigali airport would put French troops at considerable risk," was left "in control of the methods." On the joint or solo nature of the operation, Édouard

Balladur affirmed that there was “no question of going it alone,” with François Mitterrand arguing for the support of the “Africans,” while the CEMA envisaged that of the Italians and even the Belgians. A final point raised concerned the situation in the Tanzanian camps,⁹ about which the President, alerted by MSF, asked for an inquiry within eight days. He does not want to be “fooled” - is this a first manifestation of mistrust of the Hutu leaders who “organized the massacres” and control these camps? - of the inflated refugee figures, nor to encourage trafficking in humanitarian aid.

At the press briefing, which followed his hearing by the Foreign Affairs Commission of the National Assembly in the afternoon, Alain Juppé could not be explicit about the exact moment or nature of the planned intervention, and replied only that the mandate was to “protect lives” and “protect the population.”¹⁰ He also expressed himself very cautiously the next day in *Libération*. Entitled “Intervening in Rwanda,” the four-point article presents above all a political analysis of the situation: the minister recalls that “we must speak of genocide” but that “the crisis has both political and ethnic origins,” that the French position, which fears “a general conflagration in the region,” is that “there can be no military solution in Rwanda” nor “a lasting settlement outside of shared power,” and that it is necessary to support “the moderates of all parties.” In so doing, he shifted from “genocide” in the singular to “genocides” in the plural, suggesting the responsibility of both sides.¹¹ On the subject of a possible intervention, he referred first to international intervention, with France being “ready” if “that was not enough.”¹² On France 2, the evening Alain Juppé spoke on behalf of the government, the intervention was presented as having been decided - a decision by the Prime Minister, “in agreement with the President of the Republic” - and its contours were repeated several times in the face of the journalist’s insistence: “saving lives, not waging war,” “going in for a limited time and with precise objectives.”¹³ On 17 June, Alain Juppé’s name was again the headline on the “La vie internationale” page of *Le Figaro*: “Rwanda: Juppé wants to act quickly”; the journalist Patrick de Saint-Exupéry, usually very critical of France’s African policy, wrote that the minister “broke a taboo,” affirmed “a moral and political imperative” to intervene in the event of genocide and

“encouraged States that were too cautious to take action.”¹⁴

For his part, François Mitterrand, who no doubt did not want to leave all the media spotlight on his minister of cohabitation, devoted a large part of his speech to Rwanda at the opening of the conference on development held at UNESCO on 18 June. Through the repeated use of the word “I” - including “I have convened a core cabinet meeting [...] which has instructed the Minister of Foreign Affairs to [...]” - he asserted his prerogatives as head of State and once again took credit for the decision to intervene.¹⁵ He also emphasized the urgency of implementing it: “every hour counts.”¹⁶ In the aftermath of the meeting, Hubert Védrine had, according to his memo to the head of State, “confirmed to the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Cooperation that a list of specific actions that France could carry out in Rwanda should be submitted to him very quickly.”¹⁷

The nature and modus operandi of the operation were clarified during the interministerial meetings that took place at the Quai d’Orsay in the days that followed to study the diplomatic and military aspects. These meetings were preceded by meetings of the ministry’s crisis unit,¹⁸ which brought together the directors of the ministries concerned, the heads of the DAM and the NUOI and the Chief of Staff. Bruno Delaye and General Quesnot, who were present on behalf of the President, reported to François Mitterrand, without forgetting to specify the positions of the various parties. Although it was clear to all the protagonists that any intervention plan had to be approved by the President and the Prime Minister¹⁹ and that diplomatic telegrams had to be submitted to them for approval, the format of the intervention was quickly expanded. On 16 June, Admiral Lanxade, while reiterating the humanitarian nature of the intervention - it was to be marked by a priority operation to be carried out “opposite Bukavu, where a Tutsi community, surrounded by Hutu militiamen, was seriously threatened,”²⁰ - declared that he was putting in place a “combat-ready force” of 2,000 men who could enter through Zaire and Burundi and then advance by road. General Quesnot warned of the delays that would require troops to be pre-positioned in Bangui - “if we don’t get there within two days, there’s no point” - and stressed that it was necessary to “plan to go into the RPF zone as well” and

not just the government zone.²¹ The President agreed the same day to “the rapid deployment of reinforcement resources in Bangui”²² but the Prime Minister opposed it the next day, following a meeting with François Léotard. On a memo from Bruno Delaye and General Quesnot dated 17 June, Hubert Védrine noted: “Disagreements within the government (Quai d’Orsay versus Matignon, Defense, Cooperation).”²³ Interviewed at the same time by journalists from *Jeune Afrique*, Alain Juppé declared that, on Rwanda, he had “the same analysis” as the Élysée.²⁴

5.1.2 The confrontation of two options (16-22 June)

On 16 June, during the interministerial meeting, Édouard Balladur, who did not want his government to be accused by the RPF of coming to the aid of those responsible for the massacres, made the participation of at least one European country a condition for intervention, which was not the case.²⁵ His veto on the pre-positioning of troops was confirmed at the two meetings of the crisis unit on 17 June, where scenarios were presented and discussed. The military - Admiral Lanxade in the morning, Generals Germanos and Quesnot in the afternoon - seemed to be committed, according to the interpretation and the words of Bernard de Montferrand, Matignon’s diplomatic advisor, to a “logic of reconquering Rwanda,” which was judged to be dangerous and likely to lead to a conflict with the RPF. General Germanos was opposed to the idea of only carrying out hit-and-run operations, and proposed advancing into Rwandan territory to “stabilize” it as it went along: “Intervene on the first day in Cyangugu, leave an element of security there, and then advance in the direction of Kigali.” On behalf of the Prime Minister, who “wanted to avoid the risk of getting bogged down” and feared “finding ourselves in a Bosnian situation,” Bernard de Montferrand suggested envisaging “back-and-forth operations”: “save people and come back.”²⁶ The same request was reiterated the next day,²⁷ with the addition of a specific and limited duration to the mandate that France was requesting from the UN.²⁸ As no consensus emerged, a memo was prepared in the wake of a meeting at Matignon to present the different options to the President and the Prime Minister. Hubert Védrine annotated the memo written by Dominique Pin and General Quesnot for François

Mitterrand, emphasizing that the two options were “very different” and that the Prime Minister was in favor of the first option (“one-off actions” and not “progressive action to secure and stop the massacres.”) François Mitterrand did not provide any handwritten response to the questions put to him at the end, particularly concerning the authorization to go alone and the option he chose.²⁹ Nor did he react, except with the usual laconic “seen,” to Bernard Kouchner’s remarks reported by Bruno Delaye, whom he and Hubert Védrine received on 21 June upon his return from Rwanda. Bernard Kouchner wished to draw the attention of the President, who did not receive him but who had spoken on the phone on 17 June with the former minister, who was then in Kigali,³⁰ to the “risks of slippage” of the planned humanitarian operation, which was to be “localized, temporary [two months], and an incentive [for other countries],” with the aim of “protecting Tutsi civilians against the militias and in no way confronting the RPF or stabilizing the Front. For the former socialist minister, the presence of the French in Kigali must be avoided, high-level contacts with the RPF which “must be considered as an essential interlocutor” must be increased, and the military on the ground must be given “a high-level political leadership” that would have the confidence of the Patriotic Front. Moreover - and this is an implicit criticism of the previous policy pursued by his political friends - the mission “must be presented as a new stage in our policy: the past is the past.”³¹

The same day, François Mitterrand received the letter addressed to him by Édouard Balladur. The change from the initial “we” - “We have agreed,” “We have decided together” - to the first person singular - to define the five “conditions for the success of the operation” - underscores the Prime Minister’s desire to assert, in a period of cohabitation, his government’s competence to conduct the nation’s policy, including African policy. The five conditions under which Édouard Balladur tried to impose his option were: a UN mandate, an operation limited to a few weeks and to humanitarian actions, positioning of forces near the border in Zairian territory, and the contribution of “significant contingents” from other countries.³² He said he was struck by France’s isolation, despite “good words and encouragement” and considered that “we must not, at any price, get bogged down alone,

8,000 km from France, in an operation that would lead us to be targeted in a civil war.” With this letter, Édouard Balladur may also have intended to create a document for history, in particular with this sentence: “not to let ourselves be drawn into what would be considered a colonial expedition.”³³

Through Hubert Védrine, the Prime Minister also told the President that the RPR group was hostile to an intervention, despite the recent appeal by Jacques Chirac during his visit to New York and the statement by Charles Pasqua, who, on “L’Heure de vérité” (The Hour of Truth) on Channel 2, said he was “shocked” by the attitude of the international community.³⁴ In fact, during the government question session of 22 June in the National Assembly, the intervention in Rwanda was praised by RPR Henri de Richemont, who congratulated the French government. It was considered “courageous” but “risky” by the UDF Pierre-André Wiltzer, and only the Communist Maxime Gremetz deplored the fact that a “military intervention, which can only aggravate the tragedy that Rwanda is experiencing,” was not the subject of a debate by the National Assembly.³⁵ Interrupted by the positive exclamations of Robert Pandraud and Jacques Baumel, Édouard Balladur made a long response, highlighting the moral justifications for the intervention and explaining the conditions set by the government, those presented in the letter to François Mitterrand, with the exception of the positioning of the forces close to the border in Zairian territory.³⁶ In so doing, he gave political weight to his position, expressed in clear and sometimes recurring formulas: “The [French] force is not an intervention force, but a force that must protect the civilian population. Under no circumstances will [the] forces [...] take sides in internal Rwandan or regional struggles.” While he used the terms massacres and tragedy, Édouard Balladur also linked the intervention to the existence of genocide - the government, he said, had taken the decision “because it could not leave African populations to the mercy of genocide” - and named the executioners and victims: “The civilian populations [threatened] are essentially Tutsi populations in areas controlled by the government.”³⁷ Alain Juppé was also asked to discuss international reactions and possible French partners.

After Bernard Kouchner, a special DGSE file

dated 22 June³⁸ also warned of the “risks of the operation getting bogged down,” as no political solution seemed possible in the immediate future and the two belligerents were interpreting the French intervention incorrectly. It describes, according to three possible military scenarios, the difficulties that may be encountered and the precautions to be taken to avoid what the analyst calls the “Somali drift” (radicalization of the RPF’s attitude towards the French forces) and the “Bosnian drift” (entrenched positions, the second scenario envisaged, and a lasting conflict). If, in the first and most likely scenario, the Front continues to advance, it is preferable to “focus the bulk of the French effort in the south-west of the country, a region with a high density of Tutsi refugees” and not in the north-west where the interim government is based. If, in the third scenario, the FAR regained ground, France would be in a very uncomfortable position, “insofar as the French government would not fail to be taken to task both by the RPF and by international opinion, which was already skeptical about its real intentions.” To complete this picture of an impossible, or at least difficult, mission, the DGSE envisages the risk of “occasional slippage” on the part of the FAR or the Hutu militias driven by a “feeling of abandonment.”³⁹ Its conclusion appears *a posteriori* to be premonitory: “Whatever option is chosen, there is a great danger that France will be accused, at best, of not having been able to carry out the mission that was entrusted to it, and at worst, of being considered an accomplice of the current Rwandan government.”⁴⁰ The memo recognizes, however, that the horizon desired by France - a negotiated sharing of power - is possible, but that the path will be long and requires “the agreement of the RPF.” It therefore recommends that “prior to any intervention, the RPF should not only be consulted but also convinced of the merits of Operation Turquoise.” It even suggested, as a sign of goodwill, that the RPF be offered “the opportunity to place its observers among the French troops.”⁴¹

5.1.3 Hostility to the RPF, the fear of a flood of refugees (June 22-28)

The DGSE memo was read before the meeting of the core cabinet of 22 June, which was held in the afternoon and followed both the cabinet meeting and a meeting at the Quai d’Orsay with

RPF representatives, which greatly displeased François Mitterrand.⁴² In any case, the suggestion was not on the agenda, as the tone of this cabinet meeting was more clearly hostile to the RPF than that of the previous week. Already the day before, in the crisis cell at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the RPF had been mentioned in the item “Serious risks.” According to the verbatim report by Jean-Marc Simon, Michel Roussin’s deputy chief of staff, the capture of Kigali is feared: “That the RPF takes Kigali and proclaims (sic) a unilateral cease-fire (yesterday Mount Kigali was taken). There would then be more massacres in the country.”⁴³

At the core cabinet meeting, the President of the Republic immediately aligned himself with the positions of Edouard Balladur, declaring that the Prime Minister, himself and all the ministers shared “the same analysis”: “An intervention, yes, but brief, in the style of a ‘punch.’” Consequently, he invited us to talk about the “practical arrangements” outlined by the Minister of Defense: if the instruction was given, 600 men would be in Zaire that evening, 1,200 the next day and 2,300 on the evening of the 25th, with 500 vehicles and 40 aircraft. The first action envisaged was the protection of the 8,000 Tutsi in Cyangugu, and the rest would require reconnaissance and intelligence gathering. The question posed by Alain Juppé but not decided,⁴⁴ “what to do with the threatened Tutsi” envisaged three answers: to settle them in Zaire, to protect them there, or to bring them back to the RPF zone. Although the Prime Minister did not speak much, the President twice expressed a certain bitterness in the face of the criticism which, in his eyes, had replaced the approval of the previous week in France⁴⁵ as well as abroad⁴⁶ and which echoed the hostile reactions of the RPF:

Our intervention does not seem to be desired by anyone, even by those we want to save. No doubt they prefer that there be no witnesses to their victory. [...] It’s a bad deal. Eight days ago everyone wanted us to intervene immediately. Now it’s the opposite. The propaganda of the RPF in Brussels and the naivety of diplomats and journalists is disconcerting.

In affirming that “we must not fail to denounce the genocide perpetrated by the Hutu,” François Mitterrand used the term “genocide” for the first time, it seems, but he did not place the

event within a long-standing genocidal process, attributing it to the fact that “madness took hold of them after the assassination of President Habyarimana.”

He was also concerned about the front line and the future of Rwanda, where “the Tutsi are going to establish a military dictatorship in order to impose themselves on a long-term basis,” a dictatorship that, “based on 10% of the population, will govern with new massacres.”⁴⁷ Also expressed by Admiral Lanxade, whom François Mitterrand asked to “be kept permanently informed,” was the fear, in the event of a break in the front line, of a flood of refugees “in the FAR zone,” “several million people fleeing towards Burundi and Zaire.”⁴⁸

In the President’s entourage, which had nevertheless received a letter⁴⁹ from the association *Survie* with more moderate words than the one sent on 22 June to the Minister of Foreign Affairs,⁵⁰ the time was once again ripe for justification of the policy previously conducted in Rwanda. While Bruno Delaye was organizing the trip to South Africa planned for 4 and 5 July, General Quesnot wrote a long memo on military assistance to Rwanda, which he saw as part of France’s African policy. “The military aid provided to Rwanda in recent years,” he writes, “has no more or less legal basis than that provided to Chad since 1969 or to Zaire in 1978,” since France is bound in Africa by eight defense agreements and twenty-three military cooperation agreements. French interventions, he adds, “were based on the principle always respected since 1960 of non-acceptance by France of an aggression against a friendly African country, linked by defense or cooperation agreements, from a neighboring country.” The self-justifying purpose of this memo of 24 June, which Hubert Védrine emphasized, is also apparent in the attached chronology, which, annotated by the Secretary General, associates the pressure exerted on the Rwandan regime to negotiate and democratize with the two major RPF offensives, as well as the stages of the Arusha accords. However, one sentence in the final comments is ambiguous and leaves room for interpretation: is it or is it not a matter of convincing François Mitterrand and turning Operation Turquoise towards military action against the RPF? General Quesnot, while reiterating his conception of a good African policy, uses the adverb of time “today”:

If France were to renounce this course of action today [i.e., to allow external aggression], at a time when the end of the Cold War has rekindled ethnic conflicts fanned by poverty, provoking the beginning of a questioning

*of the borders inherited from colonization, the internal instability of the states would increase even more and all of our cooperation and defense agreements would be discredited.*⁵¹

This last option was never discussed at a meeting of the political authorities, at least according to the written minutes.⁵² The two following memos - that of 27 June in preparation for the meeting between the President of the Republic and the Minister of Defense, and that of 28 June, drafted jointly with Bruno Delaye for the meeting with the Prime Minister and the Defense Council of 29 June - do not mention it, even though the members of the RPF are still described as “rebels” by the Chief of Staff, and he is particularly concerned about “the break in the front line,” i.e., the advance of RPF troops beyond Kigali towards the west of the country. On the 27th, General Quesnot stated that Edouard Balladur, who feared the stalemate and contact between French troops and the RPF, had instructed Admiral Lanxade the previous day “to prohibit any presence of our units on Rwandan territory for more than twenty-four hours and to limit patrols to the border region,” objecting in particular to the maintenance of a surveillance and deterrent element at the strategic N’Gada pass. However, in his commentary, he contests this back-and-forth modus operandi:

*The success of our intervention would be called into question if massacres were to resume in sectors where our presence is very fleeting, and especially in the event of a break in the front line that would provoke a flood of millions of refugees that we could not control. The only technical response would be to control a few key points (and in particular the N’Gada Pass) by continuing the census and ensuring the protection of the most threatened refugee camps, in particular in the southern region (Gikongoro, Butare) in order to freeze population movements while awaiting the promised logistical assistance and the arrival of UNAMIR.*⁵³

As of 26 June, three options emerged “after four days of operations” and “at this stage” preference was given to the intermediate option, which facilitated the opening of west-east axes and allowed for reconnaissance and possible evacuations beyond the current zone of troops already deployed.⁵⁴ However, the memo specifies, in its point on the political dimension of the operation, on the one hand that “the military operation itself is intended to be neutral (non-interference in the internal political conflict) and impartial (protection of all threatened populations),” formulations

that are absent from the Elysée memos and from the exchanges of the three core cabinet meetings of June, and on the other hand that “the government’s long-term objective is to return to the logic of the Arusha Accords.”

In fact, Édouard Balladur’s instruction of 26 June was lifted on 27 June, allowing “an extension of the detachment’s zone of action,” which nevertheless remained in the border zone.⁵⁵ The tension between the two options, or in other words between the recommendations of the military and the caution, or reserve, of Édouard Balladur, is still evident. As the memo of 28 June written by Bruno Delaye and General Quesnot states, “General Lafourcade is trying to keep about 200 men permanently in the zones of tension and to send discreet reconnaissance missions to the potentially explosive Butare region.” The Chief of Staff and the Africa Advisor to the President, however, went further than the Ministry of Defense, writing that an additional military commitment appeared “necessary” “to prevent the resumption of massacres and to dissuade the RPF from a massive attack beyond Kigali, which would provoke an uncontrollable flood of refugees.”⁵⁶ The wording of the proposed policy is again open to interpretation. However, the question of whether or not to intervene militarily and offensively seems to have been decided at the political level the next day.

5.1.4 Not to interfere between the FAR and the RPF, to renew the political dialogue (29 June)

At the core cabinet meeting of 29 June, when Operation Turquoise had been underway for a week, the humanitarian aspect was once again mentioned, with its desire to strike a balance between the protection of Hutu and Tutsi who were perceived as massacring each other: the objective was to “avoid a resumption of the massacres,” the installation in Goma of the humanitarian cell under the authority of the Quai d’Orsay, the protection of the Tutsi refugee camps, and the evacuation of a religious community.⁵⁷ This desire for balance, which for the French authorities should mark France’s impartiality and avoid a hostile reaction from the Hutu, has been affirmed since the Cyangugu intervention. At the same time, an operation was proposed “in the Gisenyi region, in favor of displaced Hutu.” While Alain Juppé was hesitant because it was the region of the interim government, the staff

and advisors at the Élysée were in favor of it. To the question put to him on 24 June by Bruno Delaye - "Do you give your agreement to an action in the Gisenyi region?" - François Mitterrand replied positively.⁵⁸

On 29 June, the humanitarian priority of the moment, as stated by Admiral Lanxade, was "the south-west of the territory (Butare, Gikongoro) where several thousand Hutus are in difficulty." However, the discussions at this core cabinet meeting focused essentially on the state of the front, "the big question" according to the Chief of Staff being "what the RPF will do after Kigali," as well as on the political future of Rwanda. The hostility to the formation of a "Tutsiland," a term used by Admiral Lanxade - he declared that the Tutsi "have created a void"⁵⁹ and, if we are to believe not the typed minutes but handwritten notes no doubt taken by Bruno Delaye, that they were "bringing in refugees who were in Uganda" - was also evident on the part of Alain Juppé and, in a more muted way, François Mitterrand. The former asserted that "it is not acceptable to approve an exclusively Tutsi regime," while the latter questioned his chief of staff about what was happening in the Tutsi zone, particularly about the presence of massacres, a reality deemed probable "if we judge by the corpses in Lake Victoria" in Tanzania. He had however developed this theme at length just before in the cabinet meeting, exposing his perception of Rwandan history and denouncing imperialism and Tutsi false propaganda:

In Rwanda, as elsewhere in Burundi, 85 to 90% of the population is Hutu. However, the Tutsi dream of the creation in this region of a Tutsiland, an old British idea based on Uganda and parts of Burundi and Rwanda. This technical problem is an old one, and the British, the Germans and the Belgians before us have encountered it.

At some point, Burundi and Rwanda turned to France, and France developed its cooperation with these countries. [...]. I had the opportunity, on several occasions, to write to the President of Rwanda to tell him under what conditions France would support him and cooperate with him. Much of the criticism today is explained by Tutsi propaganda that presents things in its own way. The minority wants to seize power and the entire territory. Our action must be cautious, limited and life-saving. The Tutsi RPF threatens us with the massacre of French soldiers, whereas we want to prevent the Tutsi from massacring the Hutu.⁶⁰

On 29 June, the discussions about the military situation in Rwanda became more precise. Admiral Lanxade feared the rout of the FAR, the creation of an IRG hold-out in the north-west⁶¹ and therefore the arrival in the south of “three to four million refugees.” But it is Alain Juppé who most clearly sets out the options that would then be open to France:

*If Kigali falls and the front breaks down, what do we do? We will be faced with an influx of refugees to the west and we will be in contact with the RPF. So will we have to step in, stay and create security zones or withdraw.*⁶²

Unlike the minutes of the meeting,⁶³ which do not indicate any position on these choices, the handwritten memos cited above state with a terse “no” that the first option was answered in the negative, with the second option quickly becoming the preferred option with the creation of the Safe Humanitarian Zone (SHZ).⁶⁴ The fact that the refusal to intervene was confirmed by the handwritten memos of the Secretary General of the government, Renaud Denoix de Saint Marc, who wrote, before presenting the two other hypotheses: “Certainly, we will not intervene.”⁶⁵ If there was a temptation for the military to stop the advance of the RPF, it was not imposed. General Quesnot was present at the core cabinet meeting, even though he had asked to accompany François Léotard, who was visiting the French military in Rwanda on 29 June. In an undated memo to François Mitterrand, Hubert Védrine had considered this request inappropriate with these words: “Journalists are too familiar with his very anti-RPF positions (last words underlined). Moreover, he was taken to task by name in an RPF communiqué.” And the President annotated, without mentioning his particular Chief of Staff: “I do not think it is useful to accompany the Minister.”⁶⁶ At the same time, the order to recall Colonel Tauzin from Rwanda, who had made aggressive remarks to journalists about the RPF, was issued.⁶⁷

The term used by Alain Juppé who declared: “We have contacts with our partners, the OAU and the UN, so that they can convince the RPF to achieve victory but not to go all the way,” the RPF’s victory in Rwanda seemed to be recognized - at least it seemed inevitable - but its “total control over the country” was not considered acceptable. The President believes that, for the time being, the RPF will be reluctant to go beyond Kigali and cut itself off from its bases. The foreign

minister says that “we must push for the resumption of political dialogue,” by which he means between what many sources call “the Rwandan parties” and in accordance with the Arusha accords. In doing so, he expresses a common position of the political authorities. Indeed, it was with the agreement of the Prime Minister, who submitted the “idea” to François Mitterrand, who himself approved it, that his ministry sent two emissaries to “ensure contacts with both sides.”⁶⁸ Two memos from Hubert Védrine dated 27 June set out the contours of the mission. The first defines the objective: to avoid “any ambiguous situation for the military,” particularly in Gisenyi, where the latter must, “for reasons of balance,” which Edouard Balladur insists on, operate as in the south, but without having “any contact with the Rwandan government, which has taken refuge there.” This, Hubert Védrine mentions, was a directive given by François Mitterrand, who seemed to be distancing himself from the Rwandan authorities of the IRG. The second memo defines the mission as a “diplomatic accompaniment of the humanitarian operation in Rwanda” and presents the prospective members: Yannick Gérard, former French ambassador to Uganda and deputy director at the DAM would be “sent to Gisenyi to assume the few unavoidable contacts with the Rwandan government, which had taken refuge in this region, and to avoid the [French] military making any contact”; “on the Tutsi side,” it would be Michel André, former French ambassador to Congo Brazzaville, or Jacques Warin, former ambassador to the FAO, head of the French observers sent to South Africa for the elections. The latter was finally appointed.⁶⁹

The objective of these missionaries was not only to accompany Operation Turquoise, but to inform the Ministry about the state of mind of the Rwandan protagonists with regard to future political scenarios, and to convey to them the point of view of the French authorities. Renewing the political dialogue, but with whom? Is the IRG still an acceptable interlocutor for restoring the logic of Arusha, while the RPF refuses any discussion with it? Two memos from Ambassador Jean-Michel Marlaud, who has been leading an evaluation and contact mission since early May, show that the question is now being asked and that the French authorities are looking for moderate political figures for a negotiable political solution. The first memo of 27 June

reports on a meeting with Claver Kanyarushoki, the Rwandan ambassador to Uganda, who played a major role in the Arusha negotiations. The interlocutor interviewed by Jean-Michel Marlaud⁷⁰ spoke of the “hardliners” and the moderates on both sides, and considered that the interim government remained “representative of the majority tendency within the population,” but that a compromise solution could be found through “Mr. Twagiramungu, the Prime Minister designated by the Arusha agreements.”⁷¹ The second memo of 28 June reports on a meeting with Enoch Ruhigira, President Habyarimana’s former cabinet director, who was in Paris after a stay in Belgium. The latter was very critical of Faustin Twagiramungu, who was considered to have joined the RPF, where the hardliners dominated, and considered that the MRND should be associated with a political solution while removing “those in charge [...] who were involved in the killings.”⁷² The two interlocutors agreed, however, on the need for France, whose initiative was welcomed, not to present it “in ethnic terms.”

These reports from the field were not discussed at the core cabinet meeting of 29 June, where the exchanges were brief. The Prime Minister was again very discreet. Concerned above all with internationalizing the Rwandan question as quickly as possible and accelerating the arrival of UNAMIR II, he intervened only once, to reiterate the remarks of the Minister of Cooperation who, on his return from Libreville, where the heads of State of the franc zone had gathered and where he had obtained commitments in this area, had been invited by the President of the Republic to speak first. Operation Turquoise was in fact accompanied, at all stages of its implementation, by extensive diplomatic activity, as evidenced by the impressive number of diplomatic memos and telegrams to explain and attempt to convince. The political and military authorities were also anxious to make the operation legitimate in the eyes of French and foreign public opinion; it was therefore particularly publicized in the media.

5.2 A VAST DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE

For the French authorities, who had agreed to intervene in Rwanda and had specified the contours of the operation - in particular, not to go alone and to obtain a UN mandate - it was necessary to convince their Western and African partners, to solicit and obtain

foreign cooperation, and to make themselves heard at the UN Security Council. And just as much to counter the hostility of the RPF, which is expressed as soon as an intervention is announced. The task of the diplomats was not easy, as can be seen in issue 191 of the *Courrier international* of 30 June, 1994, preserved in the archives of Bruno Delaye. The main headline on the cover - "Les aventures de Tonton/Tonton au Rwanda" - is illustrated by a ferocious drawing by Chappatte, depicting, "after Hergé," François Mitterrand as a colonial driver looking for juicy contracts, sitting next to a black soldier with a bloody machete. The selected articles from the international press all denounce France's strange relationship with Africa, its hidden motives, its cynicism. A drawing by Glez, published in *Le Journal du jeudi* in Ouagadougou, shows a helmeted, booted, and armed François Mitterrand, ready to land by parachute, instructing Bernard Kouchner, who is bent over under a huge bag of rice, to "Move over, I'm coming!"⁷³

Only the Rwandan government, for whom a cease-fire and negotiations in which it would be a stakeholder were a means of avoiding an irremediable collapse, welcomed the French intervention very favorably before it was implemented on the ground, and then "interpreted it in a political manner," as a DAM memo of 23 June, 1994 emphasized.⁷⁴ In its statement of 22 June, it described the RPF as a terrorist organization, making it responsible for "the conflict that is bloodying Rwanda," accusing it of wanting to "inflict the ultimate punishment on the Rwandan people" and of having committed multiple "abuses that have never been condemned":

*The violation of successive ceasefires, the massacre of thousands of peasants, the looting, the destruction of infrastructure, the violation of the peace agreement, the assassination of two heads of State, the sending into internal and external exile of three million people, the systematic execution of several hundred thousand people, the assassination of churchmen - all these RPF crimes have benefited from the attentive understanding of those who are today opposed to a humanitarian intervention that it describes as dangerous.*⁷⁵

The Declaration ends with an appeal to all member states of the OAU and the UN "to participate, insofar as possible, in France's humanitarian operation in Rwanda, in order to save human lives and participate in the rapid resolution of the conflict." The day before, on 21 June, the Rwandan ambassador in Paris, Martin Ukobizaba, had issued a more moderate statement, but considered the

RPF leaders to be “war mongers.” Better acquainted with French concerns and language, he emphasized the priority objective of “restoring the property of war-displaced persons” and stressed the need for French humanitarian action to cover “both the government-controlled zone and the RPF-occupied zone,” since, he said, “the inter-ethnic clashes took place in both zones. He also assured that his government reiterated the commitment made at the Tunis Summit on 15 June to proceed with the trial and punishment of those “guilty of massacres,” “as soon as an ad hoc international inquiry has duly established their responsibility.”⁷⁶

5.2.1 The OAU Summit in Tunis (13-15 June, 1994): a limited diplomatic success

The heads of State and government meeting at the 30th OAU Summit forced the two belligerents to sign a ceasefire agreement on 15 June. This agreement, which required lengthy consultations, provided for an immediate halt to hostilities and massacres, the setting up of two commissions of inquiry into the circumstances of the destruction of the plane and the killings (the perpetrators of which would have to be punished in accordance with international law), and the resumption of political discussions within seven days to implement the Arusha agreements.⁷⁷ The RPF made the cease-fire conditional on an end to the massacres, while the IRG said it could only stop the massacres if there was a cease-fire.

Jean-Michel Marlaud, who was present in Tunis as an envoy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, considered the agreement signed as a success for Field Marshal Mobutu and wondered whether the RPF was sincere or had only signed under pressure from the African heads of State.⁷⁸ France sent a large delegation to Tunis - in addition to Jean-Michel Marlaud, Bruno Delaye for the Presidency, Bernard de Montferrand and his deputy Philippe Baudillon for the Prime Minister - in order to have high-level meetings on the margins of the Summit and act as mediators. The delegation met with Theodore Sindikubwabo, interim president of Rwanda, President Mobutu of Zaire and President Museveni of Uganda. Ambassador

Marlaud wrote up the minutes of these meetings on 16 June and distributed them widely by fax on 17 June.

President Sindikubwabo, who was accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and one of his advisors, Ferdinand Nahimana, founder of Radio des Mille Collines, said he was satisfied with the summit, which in his view had allowed him “to correct certain false impressions and to explain what the government wants (to end the war) and is doing (to make every effort to ensure that the cease-fire is respected).” It also allowed him to ask for the support of the international community “to stop the war and rebuild the country.” Bruno Delaye, who may have heard the Rwandan’s speech or at least read it before the meeting - an accusatory and misleading speech in which he expressed his vision of his country’s recent history⁷⁹ - insisted on the need to put an end to the massacres in order not to be rejected by the international community and made “a solemn appeal to him to take a clear position and make it public.”⁸⁰ The President’s response, as well as that of Ferdinand Nahimana to the question posed by Bruno Delaye and Bernard de Montferrand on the radio stations that should be broadcasting “peacemaking messages,” again distorts reality and is sometimes contradictory to the speech made: the forces of law and order cannot stop the massacres in the absence of a ceasefire; militia is a misnomer for “the population in arms raised against the invader”; the “radios call on the population to be vigilant and to resist the RPF and its logic of war, but they do not call for massacres, which the government condemns and whose perpetrators must be punished.”⁸¹

The meetings with the Zairian and Ugandan presidents underlined the regional stakes of the Rwandan crisis and gave a glimpse of the evolution of France’s diplomatic alliances. Field Marshal Mobutu, whom France had wished to reintroduce into the regional game since the end of April and who was close to the Rwandan government - “Demography and democracy are working against the RPF,” he told the French delegation -, claimed to have played a pre-eminent role in the signing of the ceasefire, considering that he had been able to foil “the shenanigans” or “the evasions” of his Ugandan counterpart. While the latter had tried to defer the Rwandan issue to a later meeting in Africa, he considered that the two belligerents should be told “what the leaders of the

region want and impose it on them,” i.e., a cease-fire and the resumption of dialogue under the auspices of Tanzania. He also mentioned the fear expressed by the Burundian president that he would no longer be in control of the situation in his own country if the Rwandan crisis persisted. To Bruno Delaye, who mentioned the Sudanese wish to create problems for Yoweri Museveni, he replied that his counterpart “would not have robbed him.”⁸²

The meeting with Yoweri Museveni was more strategic for the French delegation because, as Bruno Delaye told his interlocutor, France, concerned about the humanitarian dimension and the risk of internationalization of the crisis, “is counting on Uganda to achieve a cease-fire, an end to the massacres and a return to negotiations.” The Ugandan head of State, for his part, launches into a subtle analysis of the weaknesses of Rwandan society: “the absence of a middle class and a desire for modernity [which] prevents other ethnic groups from being seen as an opportunity,” a very small country, a poorly armed RPF that represents only “a segment of society.” The RPF, he adds, wants to “take power and then co-opt the other forces to lead with it,” as happened in Uganda, but it “should take into account Rwanda as it is, not as it should be.”⁸³ Yoweri Museveni says he would like another meeting because the main leaders of the Front were absent from this summit and stresses two crucial points in his opinion: the necessary punishment of the “killers” and the full application of the Arusha agreements, including in the police and the army. While stressing that “the RPF no longer listens to him,” he agreed, at the request of Bernard de Montferrand, to contact the President of the RPF and Major Kagame upon his return to Kampala, to share his analysis with them. This was not the last request made to the Ugandan president to ease the tense relations between France and the RPF, which was opposed to his plan to intervene in Rwanda.

5.2.2 Countering or circumventing the RPF's hostility

An AFP dispatch of 16 June, 1994, reports on an RPF communiqué read on Radio Mohabura and intercepted by the BBC in Nairobi. This communiqué, in which the organization appealed to the United Nations⁸⁴ and the OAU “not to allow France to marginalize it,” set out several grievances that were repeated in the days that followed with

some variations: France wants to set up an intervention force to rob it of a near military victory; it will only aggravate the situation; it will provide, under the guise of humanitarian aid, support to the genocidal government, support consistent with its previous misdeeds since it helped Habyarimana's regime militarily and did nothing to stop the spring massacres.⁸⁵ However, the RPF's discourse varies depending on the speaker and the recipient. While its representative in New York asked to meet with the French representative to the UN on 17 June and reportedly "reacted positively," even recommending the establishment of direct contact between its authorities and the French government,⁸⁶ its representative in Brussels and member of the organization's Political Bureau, Jacques Bihozagara, was much more virulent. On the same day, he signed a press release entitled "Victims of the French double dealing" which aimed to foil France's diplomatic maneuvers. This press release takes up the themes already exposed and invokes the victims of the genocide:

Yesterday's clarification by Mr. Alain Juppé does not change anything, neither the intentions of France nor the position of the RPF towards it. These children, women, men, orphans and invalids to whom France is coming to the rescue are our brothers and sisters. They have been mutilated by the weapons that France has supplied and continues to supply. They are victims of a genocide plan that France apparently knew about (see Le Soir of 17/6/1994). Be sure that they are with us to say no to any form of participation, however humanitarian, by France in Rwanda.⁸⁷

While France claims to be intervening to stop the massacres, the focus on the victims of the genocide is sometimes the main argument for questioning French intentions. As the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs was told on 22 June when he approached an RPF representative in Brussels, James Rwego, to explain France's approach, the RPF "cannot forget the 500,000 dead." He also had doubts about the appropriateness of humanitarian action "at this stage, because the genocide is over and the survivors who still need to be saved can be saved by the Patriotic Front," and considered that after the withdrawal of UNAMIR, which "could have prevented genocide by staying on the ground," the return of France would be "a new mistake."⁸⁸

The Belgian capital, home to a small Rwandan community close to the

RPF whose representatives are used to being heard, is a place where the hostility of the Front and its supporters is publicly expressed. A demonstration in front of the French embassy, with a tent set up to stay overnight, was organized on 21 June. An AFP dispatch of the day put the number of demonstrators at 300 and reported shouts of “Mitterrand, racist assassin.”⁸⁹ Ambassador Jacques Bernière mentioned this demonstration in a telegram. In it, he first emphasized that, although the Belgian government showed understanding for the French positions, the state of opinion, “which only admits the analysis of the RPF” and may have been sensitive to the disapproving words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who was visiting Brussels, was very bad and that unavowable motives were evoked: rescue of French soldiers who were with the FAR, recovery of experimental material, liquidation of the last troublesome witnesses. He estimated the number of demonstrators at about 150 and specified that they had denounced “the gunboat policy” and had given the embassy a text entitled “France is coming to the aid of the perpetrators of the genocide in Rwanda, the country of a thousand Oradours.”⁹⁰ He said that he himself was the subject of anonymous telephone threats and asked the protocol for measures to ensure his safety. The demonstration continued over the following days.⁹¹

On the ground in Rwanda, the RPF demonstrated its hostility in the run-up to and after the adoption of UN Resolution 929. Two telegrams from the Department (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), marked “secret French source” and undoubtedly emanating from the DGSE, indicated “a clear hardening” from 19 June onwards, with the RPF considering the French intervention “as an aggression.”⁹² The RPF rejected the organization of a humanitarian convoy, forcing Bernard Kouchner and his delegation of humanitarian workers and members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to return to Uganda. In Byumba, it blocked a convoy of three trucks that were going back with humanitarian aid. On 21 June, UNAMIR soldiers were unable to evacuate civilians and were even prevented from collecting water. The international mission even asked that consideration be given to the possibility of withdrawing to a neighboring country.⁹³ Members of the RPF posted themselves at the roadblocks to ask civilians for their identity papers and the NGO *Pharmaciens sans frontières* (Pharmacists Without Borders) recalled its two logisticians present in Kigali. As an

AFP dispatch of the day mentions, they were bitter about leaving after the humanitarian work they had accomplished in difficult conditions and “their great disappointment was that they did not have time to evacuate the 150 orphans taken in by Marc Vaiter, a Frenchman, who remained alone with them.”⁹⁴ On 22 June, the RPF expelled the French nationals, notably the journalists. They had 45 minutes to leave Kigali. A team from France 2 that had a car left by road. Annie Thomas of AFP and the photographer accompanying her were evacuated by the RPF to Byumba, from where they left for Uganda, escorted by a UNAMIR team.⁹⁵ The same day, the organization’s representative in New York told the Security Council, according to a Reuters report, that “UNAMIR must leave if the French come” because its men might “not always make a clear distinction [...] in the event of an escalation of hostilities.” On the same day, *Libération* published an interview with RPF President Colonel Kanyarengwe, conducted in Rwanda; the comments were accusatory of France and alarmist about the future, with the risk of the region going up in flames.⁹⁶

To mitigate this hostility and try to avoid any incidents, the French authorities requested direct meetings with RPF leaders. Jean-Michel Marlaud, the ambassador in Kigali, was sent to Rwanda for this purpose on 19 June, but Paul Kagame, interviewed by the BBC the same day, declared that he would not meet with him.⁹⁷ The ambassador and the Quai d’Orsay unit were sent back to the north of the country, under UNAMIR escort and under RPF control.⁹⁸ A meeting did not take place until 23 June in Mulindi, on the Ugandan-Rwandan border, after pressure from the United States on the RPF. On the one hand, an American delegation including the ambassador, representatives of the State Department and the Department of Defense, as well as humanitarian specialists, met in Kampala with three RPF leaders, including Pasteur Bizimungu.⁹⁹ On the other hand, George Moose, Under-Secretary of State for African Affairs, spoke for 40 minutes on the phone with Major Kagame on the night of 21-22 June, i.e., before the vote on UN Resolution 929, to sound him out, to encourage him to meet with French authorities and to try to get the RPF not to oppose the French intervention and to say so publicly. According to the French ambassador in Washington, who was informed of this, Paul Kagame declared that he

would not oppose “an operation that would have the endorsement of the United Nations” but that he was only “ready to give a verbal commitment and to control his troops, without more.”¹⁰⁰

On 23 June, Jean-Michel Marlaud and Yannick Gérard met not with Paul Kagame, but with the President of the RPF, Alexis Kanyarengwe, accompanied by four senior officials. The meeting was “courteous” and lasted two hours. Faced with grievances expressed in less “crude terms than in the organization’s communiqués,” the French sought to clear up what they considered to be misunderstandings. However, as the summary of François Descoueyte’s diplomatic telegram, which gives a long account of the meeting, indicates, “The RPF [...] remains totally opposed to our initiative. It will not do anything that could appear as the beginning of an acceptance, even tacit.”¹⁰¹ The suggestion of a subsequent meeting with Paul Kagame remains unanswered, as does the suggestion of periodic contacts and permanent liaison between the French authorities and the RPF. Finally, the meeting ends with a veiled threat, as the RPF now considers itself at odds with the international community and with France: “We should not be surprised [Alexis Kanyarengwe concludes] if we encounter problems.”¹⁰² The attitude of the RPF does not yet seem to have stabilized, or its discourse varies, once again, depending on who it talks to. Moreover, Major Kagame, whom a DGSE file of 30 June describes as “cold and distant,” “used to living clandestinely” and granting only rare audiences,¹⁰³ does not wish, for the time being, to enter into direct contact with the French authorities, who did not consult the RPF before deciding to intervene in Rwanda.

At the same time as the Mulindi meeting, a delegation from the RPF, made up of Jacques Bihozagara, its representative in Brussels and designated deputy prime minister of the transitional government, and Théogène Rudasingwa, its secretary general, was received in Paris on 22 June at the Quai d’Orsay. At the crisis unit meeting the day before, it had been stressed that this contact should remain confidential and that caution was required in external communications.¹⁰⁴ For his part, the Director of African and Malagasy Affairs, Jean-Marc de La Sablière, prepared “the points to be made,” those already explained in this chapter - action by the international community, humanitarian purpose and not an intervention force, limited duration, concern for transparency with the

RPF - but also the following clarification concerning relations with the interim governmental authorities: France expects them “to keep a low profile with regard to a de facto operation essentially directed against the militias.”¹⁰⁵ Before a meeting with the minister, which seems to have been demanded by the RPF,¹⁰⁶ the delegation participated in a meeting with representatives of the presidency, Matignon, and the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Cooperation. Catherine Boivineau, who reported on the exchanges, concluded that “opposition to [France’s] initiative remained wholehearted, but [that] the desire for dialogue and cooperation in the future gave the meeting a positive turn.”¹⁰⁷ She also emphasizes that “the Minister confirmed [France’s] willingness to respond favorably to this request for dialogue and cooperation and [its] desire to promote the resumption of the Arusha process and the reconstruction of Rwanda.” Bruno Delaye’s report, annotated by Hubert Védrine and François Mitterrand, is more precise and less positive. The request for dialogue is mentioned succinctly after a more detailed presentation of the grievances expressed by the two Rwandans who “most clearly criticized our policy and condemned our intervention project,” a point ticked off in the margin by Hubert Védrine. The report also evokes an episode of tension in the cohabitation, suggesting once again that the government, notably the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense, does not have the same appreciation of the Rwandan crisis as the President of the Republic and his entourage. Bruno Delaye explains that the Matignon representative, Philippe Baudillon, was keen to talk about “a new French African policy,” a sensitive subject for the Presidency. The advisor reproduces the remarks that scandalized him, remarks that were repeated by the repetition of “for a year”:

*The permanent concern of Mr. Balladur, who has been leading the government for a year, is to establish clear and co-responsible relations with all African countries. For a year now, our actions have proven this. Your interpretation of French intentions in Rwanda is not the right one. It is in contradiction with what has been done for a year. The French would not understand that our intervention was anything other than humanitarian. Times change, your analysis of current French policy is influenced by a past period. This is what the Prime Minister wanted you to know.*¹⁰⁸

The paragraph, “reported” on page one of the memo with a reference to the

corresponding page, is checked off by Hubert Védrine, who also uses an exclamation mark. It is circled by François Mitterrand who writes in the upper margin: “Unacceptable, tell it [underlined twice] to Matignon [underlined three times],” an expression of anger repeated next to the warning, this time “tell it” being replaced by “protest.” The Secretary General of the Presidency asks Bruno Delaye to pass on the message, specifying that he himself will contact Nicolas Bazire, Édouard Balladur’s cabinet director. He only reacted with an exclamation mark to the words of the representative of the Minister of Defense’s office, which were “along the same lines” and stated that “the military, in the context of the planned intervention, would like to be in permanent contact with the RPF.”

At the beginning of July, French forces had been deployed in Rwanda for more than a week,¹⁰⁹ but the hostility of the RPF, which did not agree to “freeze its military action,” persisted. It perceives France’s action as “faits accomplis” and “as many provocations” but it also expresses a certain openness to dialogue, “ready to engage in it insofar as [its] movement will be recognized as a valid interlocutor on the basis of reciprocity and mutual respect”; in particular, it wants to know 48 hours in advance of the French plan of operation.¹¹⁰ A person knowledgeable about the region, François Descoueyte, who spoke on 2 July in Kampala with Aloysia Inyumba, a member of the RPF’s executive committee, analyzed the reasons for this evolution in detail: of course, total victory remained “the preferred solution” for the organization, but its leaders were beginning “to consider the post-war period,” “to think about the exercise of power and future cooperation with [France],” cooperation which “it will need.”¹¹¹ The pressure exerted by the Ugandan president may also explain this openness.

“Museveni will be reasonable,” François Mitterrand said at the 15 June meeting of the core cabinet. Despite his proximity to the RPF, he was indeed reasonable in the face of Operation Turquoise, anxious to play a diplomatic role in the region and to be recognized by Western states. However, he repeated, without immediately being heard, that the Hutu of the government movement could no longer be partners in a political future in Rwanda.

From mid-June 1994, Uganda’s support for the intervention project

and its ability to put pressure on the RPF were sought. The ambassador in Kampala, François Descoueyte, was asked “to seek a meeting with the Ugandan president to explain the principles and objectives of our initiative.”¹¹² The United States, which had offered to help in this regard, was a major advantage. After a telephone conversation between Alain Juppé and Warren Christopher, the U.S. Secretary of State, the ambassador in Washington, Jacques Andréani, was invited to ask the authorities to intervene with President Museveni, who was scheduled to visit the United States.¹¹³ The Ugandan president met with George Moose and then with the French ambassador. Dated June 22 but received at the Élysée on June 23, the latter’s telegram, which Hubert Védrine considered important and for “the President’s perusal,” emphasized that the Ugandan President intended to “make it clear to the French authorities” that the explanations given on the nature of the intervention had convinced him and that there was “no longer any problem on the Ugandan side” to support the project. Yoweri Museveni also undertook to “do something” so that the RPF would publicly declare what it was saying in private, “namely that it would not oppose an intervention that had been endorsed by the United Nations.”¹¹⁴ This public declaration would have been made “by radio” according to the words of the Ugandan president on 1 July but there is no trace of it in the archives that we consulted.¹¹⁵

After the United States, the Ugandan president, who had requested “contact with the French authorities, in Paris or London, at the highest level,”¹¹⁶ was in London where Bruno Delaye was authorized to visit him on 30 June, accompanied by the Director of African and Malagasy Affairs.¹¹⁷ As François Mitterrand’s advisor explained, the aim of the dialogue was twofold: to obtain a public declaration of approval of the French intervention; and to encourage him to put pressure on the RPF for “a cease-fire on the current lines,”¹¹⁸ as France feared an influx of refugees, a humanitarian catastrophe and the destabilization of Burundi. Yoweri Museveni set two conditions for a call for a cease-fire: on the one hand, the trial of those responsible for acts of genocide; on the other hand, the revision of the Arusha Accords to exclude “those responsible for having participated in the massacres or having authorized them,” a point that was doubly checked off and pointed out to François Mitterrand by Hubert Védrine, in one of the two memos that record

the meeting.¹¹⁹ This point, which can be interpreted more or less broadly, goes against French policy, which still considers the IRG to be one of the protagonists in the return to the Arusha Accords. President Museveni was then received in Paris, at his request, on 1 July, a visit considered timely by Matignon, the Quai d'Orsay and the Presidency. The handwritten memos of Bruno Delaye, who attended the meeting between François Mitterrand and Yoweri Museveni, make it possible to understand the diplomatic stakes, but also to observe the oratorical joust between a flattering president, who sought to convince and obtain Ugandan mediation, and a flattered president who was keen to show his knowledge of Africa and knew how to defend his positions. Both use, in their arguments, the African and Rwandan history of the last few years, a history that serves their purpose and is sometimes distorted. To the Ugandan president, the French president stated from the outset that France wanted to leave and had no "particular interest" in Rwanda. As the exchange progressed, Mitterrand told him that he was, in his eyes, "one of the most solid and wise men in Africa," that he had always "found him responsible" and "treated him as a friend," that he trusted him, and that he needed his help to get out of "a historical trap." To the man he considers, in an ethnicist vision, as "the natural ally of the RPF with a Tutsi majority," he expresses two concerns, hoping that he will use his "influence" to "calm" the situation. The first concern is the risk of a "clash" with the RPF, the message being that France and its "experienced" troops are doing everything to avoid it, but that there will be a response in case of an attack. The second concern is the political future of Rwanda, the message to the RPF being that it will have to govern and should therefore be less intransigent. For his part, Yoweri Museveni, when asked about those responsible for the 6 April attack, mentioned the positive influence he had already exerted on RPF leaders described as "children." He enjoined France not to use force and then lectured François Mitterrand on Africa, mentioning the vestiges of colonization, underdevelopment, mismanagement, and the fact that "people think [too much] in ethnic terms." He then repeated that the future of Rwanda lay in a revision of the Arusha Accords - "because of the massacres" - and a peace conference in the presence of neighboring states, with François Mitterrand conceding only on this point that "the genocide deserves punishment."

The genocide of the Tutsi - the term was used, however, without specifying the victims - was once again recognized, but François Mitterrand twice exonerated France: it was a “responsibility that France does not bear”; “France has no responsibility in this tragedy.”¹²⁰ The press release issued by the presidency at the end of the meeting, despite the emphasis on an agreement, falls short of what Y. Museveni said. The two presidents reportedly agreed on the need for a cease-fire to come into effect quickly, for those responsible for the massacres to be brought to justice, and for a political settlement to be reached through the Arusha agreements. However, there is no mention of their revision, and the fourth point, which concerns the organization of a regional peace conference, involves “the Rwandan parties to the conflict,” and therefore the interim government.¹²¹

As François Descoueyte points out in a diplomatic telegram of 4 July, 1994, the Ugandan president was “delighted with his meeting in Paris with the President of the Republic” and “finally appears to be resolutely committed to a settlement of the Rwandan crisis.”¹²² He is also an important figure in the OAU, whose secretary general is the Tanzanian Salim Ahmed Salim, with headquarters in Addis Ababa, and whose president is the Tunisian Ben Ali.¹²³ For France, it is particularly important to convince this pan-African organization, which brings together 53 states, of the merits of its intervention project in Rwanda. However, this is only one element of the diplomatic work carried out by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, his departments and the ambassadors in the world’s major capitals.

5.2.3 Convincing the international community and finding partners, particularly in Africa

Despite the abundance of sources preserved in the archives of the Presidency or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - diplomatic telegrams from Paris or embassies,¹²⁴ statements by the Ministry’s spokesperson during regular press briefings, memos by advisors to the President of the Republic, AFP dispatches, newspaper articles - the following pages offer only a summary, in keeping with the purpose of this report, which focuses on France’s action in Rwanda. They follow a chronological approach, which is the best way to

understand the sequence of events. It should also be noted that while France sought international approval, it did not wait for it to organize the intervention it had decided upon. Thus, as early as 17 June, the ambassador to Zaire was asked to collect the response of the Zairian authorities on the same day for a possible passage of French troops through their country, and a French officer was sent to Ghana to meet the head of the security forces, as France hoped to obtain a Ghanaian contingent.¹²⁵

When the plan for intervention was announced, international reactions were immediate, but some States, such as South Africa, were waiting for the reaction of other countries, in this case African, before making a decision.¹²⁶ An AFP dispatch of 15 June headlined the opposition to the OAU's plan for French intervention, giving priority to UNAMIR. Another the following day emphasized that London "does not welcome the French proposal with enthusiasm."¹²⁷ The other European partners were also reserved, with the exception of the Italians and Spaniards, who were "more positive."¹²⁸ The latter remained cautious, however, expressing in telephone calls from Alain Juppé the wish that other countries would join France.¹²⁹ Luxembourg, on the other hand, welcomed the French initiative and said it was studying the modalities of a specific contribution.¹³⁰ At the request of the French authorities, who wished to obtain the approval of the Western European Union (WEU¹³¹) and thereby encourage the member states to participate in the operation in Rwanda, an extraordinary session of this organization met in the afternoon of 17 June, but did not take a decision before the next meeting, scheduled for 21 June. The United Kingdom expressed its hostility and the French representative underlined the caution of the other member states, concluding:

*There is little doubt that it is on our bilateral efforts and our ability to convince our partners to commit themselves to us that the transition to more assertive support will depend. The possibility of conferring a WEU label on our commitment will depend on the participation of one or two other WEU partners, a guarantee of the multilateral European character of the operation.*¹³²

These bilateral efforts, which did not only concern Europe, involved telephone meetings and, even more so, steps taken by ambassadors, who were asked by the DAM on 16 June to inform

the authorities of their residence and to request “support in principle”;¹³³ then, on 17 June, to try to obtain their participation, in the

form of sending troops or logistical support.¹³⁴ Senegal agreed to participate that day, and Belgium announced logistical support through its prime minister.¹³⁵ The effort to explain the situation also involved trips by the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Director of African and Malagasy Affairs. Thus, Alain Juppé was in West Africa from 17 to 19 June, and was received in Abidjan and Dakar. His remarks, with their repetitive arguments, were based on decisions taken in ministerial meetings and core cabinet meetings, but were also adapted to the various interlocutors, according to their concerns and their requests for clarification. Thus, for example, in his telephone conversation with the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs on 22 June, Alain Juppé emphasized the following points: a “bridging” operation until the arrival of the reinforced UNAMIR, an operation for which a UN mandate had been requested, and the fact that he had met with the RPF. He then specified that it should last until the end of July, that it would be carried out in close coordination with the United Nations and, on the ground, in liaison with General Dallaire, and that the final objective was “to save lives, and in particular those of Tutsi threatened in Hutu areas,” without “plans to go [...] to Kigali.” The exchange was a success, as the Canadian minister agreed to repeat the expression of “Canada’s understanding for the suggested operation.” The next day, after Resolution 929 had been passed, Canada firmly asked Faustin Twagiramungu, who was received by the Assistant Deputy Minister for Africa and the Middle East, to put an end to his criticisms and to work towards appeasement and a ceasefire on the ground.¹³⁶ This positive attitude had not been the first reaction of this state.

While UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali quickly declared himself in favour of intervention, Canadian General Roméo Dallaire, like his government in mid-June,¹³⁷ expressed strong reservations, asking France not to intervene but to speed up the deployment of the Senegalese peacekeepers of the UNAMIR. In the first few days, the United States remained wary, fearing the possible effects on the credibility of the UN and the reactions of the RPF.¹³⁸ But the telephone exchange, already mentioned, between Alain Juppé and Warren Christopher (17 June) - like the one between his chief of staff Dominique de Villepin and the American deputy secretary of state - changed the situation, even though the United

States insisted on the importance of obtaining the agreement of the RPF. The State Department spokesperson made public, in the form of press guidelines, the American support for the French initiative, which was not considered to be contrary to the deployment of the 5,500 troops of the reinforced UNAMIR. This text does not use the word genocide but speaks of senseless massacres, senseless violence, carnage.¹³⁹

The reactions of the African states were carefully observed, especially that of Burundi. On 17 June, the ambassador met with the head of State and the army chief of staff, and concluded that while the president shared a sense of urgency, he saw “a certain number of difficulties in developing the planned military action” and that transit through Bujumbura would meet with strong opposition.¹⁴⁰ In a tense political context, the situation worsened in the days that followed, with opposition to the French project contributing to “strengthening the Tutsi opposition and stiffening its position in the various current negotiations with the government.” The ambassador received anonymous calls, a demonstration brought together 15,000 people in Bujumbura on 21 June and, the next day, a departure of French families was considered. In addition, in view of the very high tension in the north of the country, MSF France repatriated its members to the capital.¹⁴¹

In Africa, France sought to obtain a few contingents - the one in Senegal was quickly acquired - but also, and above all, support for its initiative, even with nuances that specified its limits. This support, which was sometimes in principle before unreserved support, was particularly important in order to avoid the operation being perceived by African countries as “a European intervention in a situation of African civil war.”¹⁴² The support of Zaire - which also authorized the passage of French troops - was obtained on 17 June, that of Djibouti and Togo the next day, as well as an agreement in principle from Equatorial Guinea.¹⁴³ Other African states gave their support in the days that followed. Thus, on 20 June, Chad, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau and Gabon, where President Bongo undertook to have a declaration adopted by the cabinet meeting and to ask the participants in the Libreville summit (28 June) to lend their support.¹⁴⁴ He was joined the

next day by the President of the Central African Republic, with whom he prepared a draft joint declaration of support for France to be submitted to the heads of State of the region. The agreement to use the Bangui airport was given on 22 June.¹⁴⁵ However, Kenya, which is not one of France's traditional French-speaking partners, "made it known that it could not commit itself to France."¹⁴⁶

Sent to the services of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to the ambassadors, and destined to be read by the President of the Republic, a telegram from the DAM of 19 June presented the situation in a very positive way. It mentions the support of the international community, in particular the "unreserved support" of African partners, including non-French speakers, and the fact that the Secretary General of the OAU "now accepts" the French initiative "as long as the deployment of the reinforced UNAMIR is delayed, and that the United Nations will support it."¹⁴⁷ This assessment is more optimistic than the reality. On 21 June, the pan-African organization published a communiqué presented in an AFP dispatch as a refusal to support an operation considered dangerous, "without the agreement of one of the belligerents." The OAU also asked for the presence of 4,000 African soldiers within the framework of UNAMIR II and "accused the developed countries of not having provided the necessary logistical and financial aid."¹⁴⁸ The next day, *Le Figaro* headlined, under the pen of Patrick de Saint-Exupéry: "Rwanda: la France lâchée par l'Afrique." (Rwanda: France let down by Africa)¹⁴⁹

Relations with the OAU on the Turquoise issue were complex. While France emphasized that the intervention had been decided on the day after the OAU Summit, in support of the decision for a cease-fire, which seemed fragile, the pan-African organization saw itself confiscating a diplomatic success, minimized by the French initiative. The communiqué, followed by a statement deemed "unfriendly" by the Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs, embarrassed the French authorities, who demanded an explanation. The ambassador in Ethiopia called the secretary general of the OAU to express France's "emotion" and ask him to deny the opposition displayed in the communiqué. The latter contested the interpretation given by the AFP but refused to deny it, promising only to bring the necessary clarifications if he was questioned by the press on his arrival

in New York where he was travelling on the evening of 21 June. He also confirmed to the ambassador the point of view expressed during two previous meetings: the OAU preferred the acceleration of the deployment of UNAMIR and wanted the presence of more African troops, but it shared the French concerns about Rwanda and would not oppose the operation if it was accepted by the UN.¹⁵⁰

The Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs, who stated that he wanted “exclusively African troops” and referred to initiatives that “hindered reconciliation and peace efforts,” was also asked to explain what the ambassador considered to be an “inconsiderate gesture.” The French representative, Jean-Noël Lacoste, said he wanted to express “the sensitivity of the Africans [...] marked by the Somali experience,” but these explanations did not satisfy him, especially since the minister did not answer the question of whether he would support a UN resolution. With condescension for the Tunisian authorities and a veiled threat, the ambassador concluded his comments as follows:

*The concern of the Tunisians to keep the Franco-Tunisian dialogue “away” from this case seemed to me, in its absurdity, sincere. No doubt the Minister will be led to make it clear here that such a distinction is inconceivable, given the importance we attach to our action in Rwanda.*¹⁵¹

Following these frictions, which also led to fears that Ghana would backtrack,¹⁵² the ambassador to Djibouti shared the advice given by the Djibouti Minister of Foreign Affairs: to focus persuasion efforts “as a priority on all the OAU States that are members of the central conflict prevention agency, in order to better influence the positions taken by [the] organization.”¹⁵³ For its part, for the DAM, worried about the echoes in the international press, “it must be clear that France will not engage in Rwanda against Africa.” It asked the ambassadors to intervene with the authorities “so that they publicly express their support [...], and also that they intervene with the Secretary General of the OAU and the Tunisian presidency.”¹⁵⁴ The President of Senegal, Abdou Diouf, said he was surprised and perplexed by the positions taken by the OAU Secretariat and Tunisia; he “used his authority,” as requested, to intervene with President Ben Ali.¹⁵⁵ In Côte d’Ivoire, a State

which holds the vice-presidency of the OAU's conflict prevention body, the government kept a low profile vis-à-vis its public opinion, which was mobilized by a press that was very reserved about the French intervention, and at the same time made a show of goodwill towards France, recognizing that "it was necessary to avoid epidermal reactions based on self-esteem" and "that the members of the OAU had neither the financial means nor the indispensable logistics to send the necessary contingent quickly."¹⁵⁶

The vote on Resolution 929¹⁵⁷ on 22 June did not resolve all the difficulties encountered by France in silencing the critics and obtaining support for or participation in Operation Turquoise, even though some states approved the intervention from then on and others, such as Egypt on 25 June, questioned the terms of their participation. The RPF undertook a tour of African countries to discredit the French, to develop its analysis of the Rwandan situation and to encourage the authorities not to cooperate. Seth Senadashonga, a member of the Political Bureau, went to Accra in particular, "knowing that the Ghanaians were hesitant about what to do"; a visit that achieved its objective since Ghana finally refused to participate in Operation Turquoise.¹⁵⁸ Significantly, a DGSE memo of 23 June on reactions to the French initiative in Rwanda mentions fifteen African countries out of eighteen presented, the other three being Germany, Belgium and the United States.¹⁵⁹

In Europe, the WEU Council, which had formally decided on 21 June to support the operation by coordinating the contributions of the member states, confirmed this on 24 June, when six out of nine countries made a firmer commitment, but without specifying their contribution.¹⁶⁰ Switzerland remained silent on Operation Turquoise, but the Swiss press was very critical and questioned France's African policy, which was still marked by colonialism.¹⁶¹ The support of the Holy See, which was strongly desired and requested in mid-June¹⁶² and obtained indirectly through the voice of John Paul II who, during the Angelus on Sunday, 19 June, "encouraged the efforts undertaken by the international community,"¹⁶³ was relayed to the Italian authorities so that France would not be left alone. However, Italy continued to make the sending of troops conditional on the agreement of "all the Rwandan parties," which was impossible to obtain.¹⁶⁴ At the end of June, the Netherlands did not confirm the logistical contribution it had envisaged.¹⁶⁵ Belgium, where

Colette Braeckman's "venomous" articles exasperated the ambassador, who sent them to his supervisory authorities, transferred the specific requests for logistical support made by France to its general staff on 25 June,¹⁶⁶ but the government was not unanimous on the aid to be provided, the Minister of Foreign Affairs - a Flemish socialist - being reserved. The decision to send a medical detachment of 48 people was finally taken at a cabinet meeting on 1 July with a departure date of 4 July.¹⁶⁷ As for the United States, it confirmed on June 30, through the voice of the Deputy Secretary of State, its "full support" but did not provide any logistical assistance, preferring to help future UNAMIR contingents and first of all the Ghanaians.¹⁶⁸

In total, as hoped, France did not engage alone, but the contributions remained modest and essentially African: a Senegalese company present from the first days of the operation (about 243 soldiers), a small Chadian company proposed only on 5 July and arriving later on the ground (130 soldiers), a division from Niger and another from the Congo, also arriving late, and a Mauritanian medical team of about ten people.¹⁶⁹ European or American logistical assistance is lacking. Only Belgium sent a medical corps, after much hesitation. The second condition put forward by the French political authorities - an operation under a UN mandate - also required numerous diplomatic steps, and Resolution 929 adopted on 22 June by the UN Security Council did not receive unanimous support from the voters.

5.2.4 Obtaining a UN mandate

As soon as the political decision was taken, Alain Juppé met with the UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who declared himself in favor of the French intervention. On 29 April, 1994, Boutros Boutros-Ghali had already called on the Security Council to take new decisions, including authorizing its members acting in their national capacity to take forceful action to restore order and put an end to the massacres in Rwanda.¹⁷⁰ This support from the Secretary General was fundamental and facilitated France's efforts, which nevertheless had to convince, or at least obtain the consent of, the other permanent members - China, the United States,

the United Kingdom, Russia - and the ten temporary members of the Security Council. In 1994, these ten members are Argentina, Brazil, Djibouti, Spain, Nigeria, New Zealand, the Sultanate of Oman, Pakistan, Rwanda and the Czech Republic. Are these words really expressed in unvarnished language or are they translated by Jean-Bernard Mérimée, France's representative to the UN? The Francophile Boutros Boutros-Ghali is said to have declared to him upon presentation of the French project:

*You are going to have everyone against you because your initiative is a slap in the face for the Europeans, who do not have the courage to go, for the OAU, which has neither the means nor the will, and for the UN, whose inability to act quickly you highlight.*¹⁷¹

Highly mobilized during those days in June 1994, Jean-Bernard Mérimée received recommendations from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, increased his contacts in New York and reported back to his supervisory authority. On 16 June, he was asked to begin consultations "without delay" "to obtain cover [...] from the United Nations," with "authorization to use force, within the framework of Chapter VII, in the image of UNITAF (Somalia) and the Gulf affair." He was also asked to make it clear to the President of the Security Council that France was not responding to a request from the Rwandan government, and to the Rwandan representative that he should not intervene in future discussions.¹⁷² In the same diplomatic telegram, he received the following draft of a short resolution:

*The Security Council, considering the state of distress of the civilian populations in Rwanda, considering the time required for the full deployment of UNAMIR, convinced of the imperative need for protective action, etc., authorizes member countries, acting in their national capacity or within the framework of regional arrangements, to intervene without delay, by all necessary means, to protect the civilian populations.*¹⁷³

The next day, Jean-Bernard Mérimée noted that "the preliminary reaction of the members of the Security Council to the French initiative was rather positive" and that "the main questions concerned the articulation between this operation and UNAMIR, and the reaction of the RPF."¹⁷⁴ On 19 June, he reported on the letter from the Secretary General to the President of the Security Council in support of France's request. This letter, the original of which was in English, invited

the Council to consider “the offer of the French government to undertake, subject to its authorization, with other member States, under Chapter VII of the Charter, a multinational operation under French command.”¹⁷⁵ Mentioning that since “the tragic events of 6 April 1994,” he has made several reports to the Security Council “reiterating the need for an urgent and coordinated response by the international community to the genocide into which the country has sunk,” Boutros Boutros-Ghali emphasizes the urgency of the request, while the time frame for sending in the reinforced UNAMIR troops will be long, estimated at three months. Two other arguments were put forward to reassure the Council: on the one hand, the fact that there is a precedent - the unified intervention force led by the United States that was deployed in Somalia in 1992; on the other hand, a time limit on the eventual mandate, Boutros-Ghali himself insisting that the French force commit to staying until it was relieved by UNAMIR. The letter ends by opening up a political horizon in line with previous UN decisions: “It goes without saying that the efforts of the international community to bring stability to Rwanda, by putting an end to the genocide (underlined in the text) and by obtaining a cease-fire, are aimed at a resumption of the Arusha Accords.”¹⁷⁶

At this stage, the Security Council’s response remained cautious, stressing that it was aware “that the current situation in Rwanda is a unique case that requires immediate and exceptional action.”¹⁷⁷ An AFP dispatch of 20 June, found in the archives of the Élysée,¹⁷⁸ along with many others in these days of diplomatic offensive, and noted “seen” by François Mitterrand, speaks of a “mixed reception,” the main objections coming from New Zealand, which does not doubt, however, “the good faith of the French.”¹⁷⁹ Hence the decision to hold new consultations in the Security Council on 21 June.

Wanting to act quickly and obtain, if possible, a vote on 21 June,¹⁸⁰ France circulated a second, more substantial draft resolution. The ambassadors in residence in the member countries of the Security Council were invited to make a rapid approach to the authorities at the highest possible level, “to inform them of the passage of our resolution and to solicit their unreserved support.”¹⁸¹

While the RPF had some influence in New York, the United States, which advocated dialogue with the organization, questioned one unspecified aspect: the attitude of French forces in the event that they were to find themselves in the presence of “suspected criminals.” According to the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, this aspect worries the RPF leaders he interviewed, who “suspect [the French] of wanting to shield Hutu extremists from justice?”¹⁸² Other states expressed frank reservations, in particular and again New Zealand, which was concerned about the negative consequences for UNAMIR and displayed “a very firm attitude.”¹⁸³ Mérimée feared what he called delaying tactics: asking the UNAMIR commander for a report. For its part, China, according to the French ambassador in Peking, gave a very convoluted response, but “might let it happen.”¹⁸⁴ As for Russia, which had insisted from the moment the French proposal for intervention was announced that the sites to be protected should be chosen with the agreement of the UN, it rallied to the proposal, with the situation in Georgia in mind.¹⁸⁵

An unsigned memo from the United Nations and International Organizations Division (NUOI) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated 21 June, takes stock of the reactions of the member States of the Security Council, presumes the content of the speeches and evaluates the upcoming votes. It reports “a rather favourable, albeit cautious, reception,” stating:

Among the members of the Council, we are assured of the active support of the United States, Spain and Djibouti.

Most probably we can count on the support of the Czech Republic, Oman and the United Kingdom, which has evolved.

*The position of Russia, China and Argentina remains cautious, but these countries should not oppose the adoption of the resolution. The same is probably true of Nigeria. Boutros-Ghali is meeting with the Non-Aligned Caucus today. Brazil and Pakistan have not spoken. That leaves Rwanda (its case is special, the objective being that it should not intervene in the debate) and New Zealand, the only member opposed at this stage to our initiative, for fear that it would make it impossible to maintain UNAMIR by provoking a rejection by the RPF. Steps have been taken at a high-level in Wellington.*¹⁸⁶

Once again, Boutros Boutros-Ghali reiterated his support for France, but added that it was up to the Security Council to make the

decision.¹⁸⁷ The Security Council made a decision on Wednesday, 22 June, and adopted Resolution 929, which, with its ten considerations and twelve points of agreement or decisions, placed the future Operation Turquoise under a UN mandate, but with “national command and control.” France, whose draft had only undergone “a few editorial amendments,”¹⁸⁸ was not explicitly mentioned in the text, but the Council “welcomes the offer of Member States to cooperate with the Secretary-General in order to achieve the objectives of the United Nations in Rwanda through the establishment of a temporary operation [...]” The objective of the “multinational” operation, the cost of which is to be borne by the States concerned, is to “contribute, in an impartial manner, to the security and protection of displaced persons, refugees and civilians in danger in Rwanda.” These “humanitarian objectives” are further specified in paragraph 3, which authorizes, with reference to Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the use of “all necessary means” to achieve them. The clarification refers to sub-paragraphs (a) and (b) of paragraph 4 of Resolution 925 (8 June 1994) which assigns as a second objective “security and support for the distribution of relief and humanitarian assistance operations” and mentions as a possible means of achieving the first objective - security and protection of persons - “the establishment and maintenance, where possible, of safe humanitarian areas.” Moreover, since France wanted a shorter time frame than that initially proposed by the Secretary-General,¹⁸⁹ the duration of the operation is limited to two months following the adoption of the resolution, “unless the Secretary-General considers before the end of that period that the reinforced UNAMIR is in a position to fulfill its mandate.” Finally, periodic reports are expected on the conduct of the operation and “the progress made in achieving the objectives,” the first of which must be submitted no later than 15 days after the adoption of the resolution. It should be noted that the text of the resolution does not use the term “genocide” and that there is no mention of a deployment zone for the operation, which may be the entire territory of Rwanda, and that the mandate may give rise to interpretation regarding the use of force.

While most Security Council resolutions were adopted unanimously in those years, Resolution 929 was adopted with an “abnormally high number of abstentions” (China, New

Zealand, Brazil, Nigeria and Pakistan) and “some gnashing of teeth,” as Jean-Bernard Mérimée points out in retrospect.¹⁹⁰ On the day of the vote, he made a more positive analysis, considering the adoption to be a success in view of “the active campaign conducted by the RPF [...] and the reserved stance taken by the OAU,” and also in view of “the particular character (humanitarian action in Chapter VII, only bilateral participation at this stage, and national command) of the operation.”¹⁹¹ In detailing what took place during the meeting, specifying the content of the explanations of a vote when they were given or his analysis of the respective choices of the various states, he emphasizes the decisive role of the Secretary-General, who pointed out the risk that the massacres would spread to Burundi and emphasized that inaction entailed even more risks than the proposed operation. Three states - the United States, Spain and Djibouti - voted “unreservedly” for the resolution, considering that the delay in the deployment of UNAMIR did not leave any other solution. Others emphasized the humanitarian nature of the resolution and called for continued efforts to strengthen UNAMIR. Rwanda thanked the Secretary-General for the resolution, “without putting too much emphasis on [France’s] vote.” The Czech Republic, on the other hand, insisted “that the force remain in Rwanda until the effective deployment of UNAMIR, three months if necessary.”¹⁹²

As for the abstainers, their motivations are diverse. According to Mérimée, Pakistan, which did not explain its vote, was afraid of endangering the Pakistani contingent of UNAMIR. According to the French representative at the UN, Brazil and China would have voted for the resolution if they had had 24 hours to consult their capitals again, but the latter invoked the Somali precedent for its abstention and made a statement two days later in Beijing, adding to its arguments the absence of agreement by the parties concerned and the necessary cooperation of the states of the region, as well as regional organizations.¹⁹³ As for Nigeria and New Zealand, they pointed to the OAU’s reticence and the risks to the security and viability of UNAMIR, which was considered the only one empowered to accomplish the objectives assigned by the United Nations. The next day, however, the authorities in Wellington called the French ambassador to “wish

the multinational force under French command in Rwanda every success.”¹⁹⁴

Alain Juppé sent a letter of thanks to the UN Secretary General, insisting on coordination between Turquoise and UNAMIR through the establishment of permanent contacts between the services of the Secretariat and the permanent mission of France on the one hand, and the command of UNAMIR and the French forces in Rwanda on the other.¹⁹⁵ As stated in a June 23 memo from the DAM, which however speaks in the future or conditional tense, Colonel Bastien of the French permanent mission in New York “should receive from the staff in real time, ideally every day, the information to be communicated.” On the ground, as it is “not desirable” to send a French officer to Kigali, “it could be proposed to General Dallaire that an officer (possibly Senegalese) be seconded to Goma, otherwise the link should be by telephone.” Furthermore, to ensure the interface between the military and the humanitarian aid, a liaison unit, whose composition, in addition to a doctor and a logistician, remains to be determined, should be set up “under the civilian unit, which is itself placed under the commander of Operation Turquoise.”¹⁹⁶

The pre-positioned French forces could then deploy to Rwanda. However, as this same memo, which lists questions about the operation, shows, there are many uncertainties. While it is clear that the French forces will be confronted with different types of population - the threatened, the displaced, and the militias and others responsible for massacres - at least four questions remain unanswered and will need to be answered as the operation unfolds in the field:

What is meant by a security zone? Are they large areas or any place of refuge? Who will protect them, will it be the French forces?

Will the people to be protected be evacuated to Zaire or protected in situ? What about the isolated and threatened people who will be reported? What about the displaced Hutu who, according to the NGOs, are “captives” of their authorities?

What attitude should the armed forces adopt towards the militias and others responsible for the massacres that will certainly be pointed out to them?

*The problem of the Gisenyi region: even if there is no movement of our forces towards Gisenyi at first, cases of threatened people will certainly be reported to our forces in nearby Goma.*¹⁹⁷

How was Operation Turquoise planned

from a military point of view and how was it adapted to the realities encountered on the ground? This adaptation is all the more necessary as the mandate obtained by France leaves French political decision-makers, as well as the military forces deployed, considerable room for interpretation, particularly with regard to the means to be used to achieve the assigned objectives.

5.3 TURQUOISE'S MILITARY PLANNING: LONG HESITATIONS

5.3.1 *A mission with complicated contours even before the UN mandate*

As soon as the principle of a French operation in Rwanda was accepted, the units concerned were put on alert, starting with those of the Special Operations Command (COS). The possibility of action by the French armed forces in a humanitarian context in favor of Rwanda was not a totally new idea on 15 June 1994.¹⁹⁸

5.3.1.1 DEFINING THE POSSIBLE OPTIONS

Admiral Lanxade wrote a memo to the Minister of Defense defining the general framework necessary for the operation. First of all, he emphasized the need to place the operation “within a well-defined international framework, with the desirable participation of other countries, in particular the WEU and even African countries.”¹⁹⁹ The Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces then proposed an operation that was explicitly characterized by action in the area of the interim government:

*The general outline of the operation provides for the deployment of our forces in the zone controlled by the Rwandan government. An action will be conducted in the Cyangugu area before an eventual engagement towards Kigali. The aim is to provide immediate assistance to the Tutsi refugees there to demonstrate our impartiality.*²⁰⁰

The Admiral's proposal leaves many options open or at least in limbo. Thus, while the possibility of continuing French action as far as Kigali was mentioned, it remained secondary to a deployment in the south-west of the country,

as did the stabilization of the neighboring countries of Burundi and Zaire. Within the French General Staff, the readings of the Rwandan situation may vary, however, because while the CEMA refers to “Tutsi refugees” to designate the survivors of the genocide, an analysis report of the same day from the joint operations center paints a more dramatic picture of the situation:

*situation: the civil war, reawakened by the assassination of the Rwandan president on 6 April 1994, resulted in a veritable genocide perpetrated by certain Rwandan military units (Presidential Guard) and by Hutu militias against the Tutsi minority of the population or certain moderate Hutu cadres.*²⁰¹

The same document points out the presence of gangs formed by uncontrolled Hutu civilians or soldiers who continue to massacre “their Tutsi fellow citizens of all ages according to their whims and the incitement to popular Defense by the leaders of the militias.”²⁰² The report also emphasizes how many people were displaced by the massacres: “Several hundred thousand people of Hutu and Tutsi ethnicity were massacred, and an even greater number fled to escape the killings [...]”²⁰³ Finally, the particular situation of Kigali is mentioned: “In Kigali, 400 Blue Helmets were not in a position to defend themselves, and the cease-fire was broken on the morning of the 16th.”²⁰⁴

This representation of powerless peacekeepers undoubtedly fuels the idea that France might consider pushing its action into the Rwandan capital at some point. In order to protect the population, it would be necessary to position itself in the city at strategic points. A memo sent by the COS to the deputy head of operations, General Germanos, on 16 June, evaluated the possibility - judged to be low - of a successful helicopter raid on Kigali.²⁰⁵ The operation had a “humanitarian motive”:

*1. As things stand, the RPF's agreement to the intervention of French troops in Kigali is not conceivable, even for humanitarian reasons. As a result, the study of the engagement of the COS in this capital must exclude from the outset the capture of the airfield, which would present the major risk of a blockade that would be completely contrary to the desired effect.*²⁰⁶

On 16 June, the option of going to Kigali was still on the table, and the documentation on the threatened populations designated the Rwandan capital as an important site; the redactor of the memo emphasized

the complexity of this option and, consequently, the difficulty of implementing it.²⁰⁷ Afterwards, there was no further mention of such a plan, and the evidence suggests that the plan was not favored by the French military staff, since it was not implemented. Four days later, French military intelligence analyses precisely identified a number of places in Kigali where displaced and/or threatened people were taking refuge.²⁰⁸ However, it appeared to the planners that such an arrangement risked placing them in the middle of the front line between the FAR and the RPF. This raises the question of the relationship with the belligerents. It was raised by the COS in a memo dated 15 June, which envisaged two hypotheses: “H1 flexible engagement” and “H2 forceful engagement.”²⁰⁹ The first option explicitly presupposes the agreement in principle of the FAR,²¹⁰ while H2 emphasizes the difficulty for the COS to commit itself against the FAR,²¹¹ the conclusion is that “H1 thus appears to be the desirable solution (because it is reasonable), but it implies a delicate political set-up.”²¹² In its reflections, the COS emphasizes the extent to which opposing the FAR does not seem desirable, if at all possible. At that time, in the French General Staff, although a military victory for the RPF seemed possible, no one believed in its ability to win politically.²¹³ This analysis weighed on the definition of the options available to the French:

Possible options: in all cases, take Cyangugu and secure the camp to “quickly show our determination and our neutrality.”

Option 1: three points of entry Goma (efforts) Bujumbura (humanitarian) Bukavu (Cyangugu ops): this mode of action is intended to progressively secure the zone currently controlled by government forces along the general axis Gisenyi Rubengeri Kigali. In view of the advantages and disadvantages and the risks presented by these three options, which are detailed in the appendix, option 1 should be chosen.²¹⁴

Thus, on 16 June, the exploration of the three options appears to be a synthesis of the previous day’s reflections²¹⁵; the question of a push to Kigali is not abandoned, but it still appears more as a horizon than as a primary objective.

5.3.1.2 A FIRST OPERATIONAL PLAN

At this stage of the planning process, the influence of regional geopolitical considerations on the design of the operation was still very strong. The hoped-for role of the operation was to stabilize not only Rwanda but

also the entire region. The choice was clearly made in favor of option 1, without it being possible at this stage to document the decision-making process.²¹⁶ On 17 June, a coordination structure was set up in Paris, as reported in an organizational memo on 28 June.²¹⁷ On the same day, General Germanos contacted General Janvier, who commanded the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to ask him to carry out in-depth planning for the operation. To this end, he drew up a draft of its objectives and time frame:

*In the first instance, to mark the humanitarian character of the operation by rapidly protecting the assembly area for displaced persons in Cyangugu, and simultaneously deploying to the Goma platform. Secondly, to progressively control the extent of the Hutu country in the direction of Kigali and to intervene in the assembly sites to protect the populations. In the third phase, to hand over to UNAMIR II.*²¹⁸

Also on 17 June, Admiral Lanxade sent a personal directive to General Lafourcade, whom he put in charge of the operation.²¹⁹ The formal appointment of the general did not take place until 20 June.²²⁰

On 20 June 1994, the Joint Staff in charge of the general planning of Operation Turquoise firmly underlined the principles according to which the French forces should conduct their action with regard to the belligerents, and in particular with the interim government and the FAR. In the context of a plan that still envisages a military presence in Gisenyi, it is emphasized that it is necessary to

affirm to the local Rwandan civilian and military authorities our determination to put an end to the massacres in the entire zone controlled by the FAR. To prescribe to these authorities the measures necessary to effectively stop the massacres. To progressively engage on the general axis Gisenyi, Ruhengeri, Kigali in order to monitor the implementation of these measures and their effectiveness, to conduct intelligence operations on the forces present and on the local situation. In the event of non-implementation of the prescribed measures, initiate military action to enforce them, which may include the use of force in accordance with the rules of engagement. Carry out, with the necessary firmness while ensuring strict respect of neutrality towards the different parties, presence and dissuasion actions likely to restore the population's confidence. Provide appropriate health support to the population in the area after possible contact with local medical authorities

*and NGOs. Be able to intervene at any time, if necessary by force, for the benefit of the elements deployed throughout the theater.*²²¹

On 21 June, Admiral Lanxade wrote an urgent memo on the subject of “humanitarian intervention in Rwanda”²²² in which he emphasized

*I have made clear in good time the constraints of an intervention in Rwanda under the conditions desired by the government. I now believe that time is of the essence because the announcement already made several days ago of our probable intervention increases the risk of a significant aggravation of the situation. The RPF could undoubtedly try to take Kigali to secure its victory, inciting the FAR and especially the Hutu militias to increase the massacres.*²²³

However, several major developments can be highlighted: the prospect of a push towards Kigali is receding and the option of a helicopter raid has been definitively abandoned²²⁴; what remains is the alternative of “back-and-forth operations to go and look for threatened people” and “protection operations on the spot.”²²⁵ This military caution is explained by Nathalie Loiseau-Ducoulombier in a memo of the same day to Bernard Émié, when she emphasizes the weight of past experience.²²⁶ This caution thus contrasts sharply with the very martial and committed tone of the initial order written on 22 June by the EMA’s deputy chief of operations, General Germanos, an order written under the authority of the CEMA.

5.3.1.3 THE INITIAL ORDER OF 22 JUNE AND ITS DISCUSSIONS

On 22 June, 1994, the Turquoise operation order was issued under the signature of the EMA’s deputy chief of operations, General Germanos.²²⁷ The order began by setting out an objective centered on ending the massacres: “Secondly: mission. To put an end to the massacres wherever possible, using force if necessary.”²²⁸ To this end, he then describes the idea of maneuvering: “In order to mark the humanitarian nature of the operation, ensure from the outset the protection of the assembly area for displaced persons in Cyangugu while initiating the deployment of the force on the platforms of Goma and Kisangani.”²²⁹

But General Germanos foresees an advance into what he defines as “Hutu country.”²³⁰ On the same day, in a memo, the DGSE emphasizes that too great a presence in this “Hutu stronghold” is a political risk.²³¹ In addition, the intelligence service stresses that the probability of a military recovery of the FAR is

extremely low. Thus, the analyses underlying the order of 22 June signed by General Germanos, without being contradicted, may appear to be debated in the name of the “risk of getting bogged down.” The next day, the initial operation order was extended by a logistical directive that specified certain objectives assigned to Operation Turquoise.²³² On the same day, the office of the Minister for Humanitarian Action urged the office of the Minister of Defense, in this case the diplomatic advisor, Bernard Émié, to quickly set up a humanitarian aid unit in Goma to allow for a smooth interface between humanitarian aid actors and the French military.²³³

On 26 June, while the first French troops were on the ground and in contact with the local authorities, a memo emphasized the nature of Turquoise as a “military operation with a humanitarian purpose.”²³⁴ Within this framework, three options were envisaged: one that did not require any lasting presence on Rwandan territory, another, intermediate, that aimed at a projection towards Gitarama and Gikongoro, and a third defined as “a strategically more ambitious option [that] would consist of aiming in the long term at securing this triangle where streams of Hutu refugees - fleeing the advance of the RPF - and Tutsi - fleeing the hunting of militias - are massed.”²³⁵

This option is seen as resolving many issues, in particular that of the pressure on the borders of Zaire and Burundi; at the same time, it would make it possible to secure the refugee populations and thus “prevent the risk of massacres of minorities or religious communities in response to the pressure exerted by the RPF on the zone.”²³⁶ It is noted that this “extension of the intervention zone makes it necessary to have a greater presence in Rwanda, even if this presence can remain light (the EMA concept of a permanent shuttle service),”²³⁷ but with this option, “we are clearly closer to the front lines of the RPF, and close technical liaison with the RPF or at least precise information from it is indispensable,”²³⁸ which does not make it all that desirable at this stage of the reflection. Thus, four days after the initial order, the idea of large-scale actions in Rwanda, which seemed to be a feature of the order drafted by General Germanos, was already widely discussed.

On 28 June, 1994, in a summary analysis, the Secretariat of National Defense directly questioned the French project in Rwanda,

underlining all the difficulties that it was not only encountering, but also that it was going to encounter, because the operation “constituted an emergency reaction of a nature to limit the massacres that were continuing in Rwanda,”²³⁹ and there was no shortage of risks of regional destabilization.

5.3.2 ENTERING GOMA AND RWANDA FIRST: THE CHOICE OF INTERLOCUTORS AND OBJECTIVES

The involvement of the Special Operations Command in Operation Turquoise implies a significant presence, with a large number of personnel. The COS operated as part of a group under the command of Colonel Rosier, who was, at the beginning of June, one of the deputies of General Le Page, who commanded special operations. Several elements mark this involvement. First of all, the COS had to open up the theater of operations, making the first contacts and carrying out the first reconnaissance. The establishment of a continuous French presence on Rwandan territory made it largely sedentary, since it was assigned a zone to control in the center of the SHZ. Once settled, the COS group was reinforced with support resources from the RICM (Marine Infantry Tank Regiment), among others, and search and action commandos armed by parachute regiments. However, within the framework of the logic prevailing for special operations, the COS is withdrawn before other French troops.

Because it is the first to arrive on the scene, and because it involves, by its very nature, the most complicated measures, the COS involvement alone accounts for a considerable portion of the difficulties due to the accumulation of objectives given to the French operation and the assumptions made.

5.3.2.1 THE COS BETWEEN ZAIRE AND RWANDA: RECOGNITION AND DISCUSSION

The involvement of special forces in Rwanda was consequential, and on the evening of 17 June, a detachment of 233 operators was envisaged for an operation of less than 3,000 men in total.²⁴⁰ On 20 June, the initial instructions defined the engagement of the COS:

*Primo Alfa: Within the framework of the Turquoise mission, the aim of which is to stop the massacres in Rwanda, the COS will intervene with a joint detachment of 234 men within an intervention force.*²⁴¹

The number of troops continues to grow, albeit marginally.²⁴² The various formations from the French Air Force, Navy and Army each remained distant from the others, under the authority of their original leader, who reported to the head of the COS group, Colonel Rosier, who in turn reported to the Joint Operations Centre (COIA) and to the COS General (GCOS). Colonel Rosier arrived in Goma from Bangui at 4:45 p.m. on 20 June.²⁴³ He struggled to meet with the military authorities, but did not specify whether they were Zairian or Rwandan. He recounts in an anecdote how much the Zairian authorities seem to distrust the Tutsi: “The head of security [at the hotel], before leaving me, advised me not to touch the food and drinks that would be offered to us because of the risk of poisoning.”²⁴⁴ A report sent at the same time by a DRM intelligence officer who arrived with him mentions that in Rwanda “the massacres are continuing, the Hutu militias have come to kill moderate Hutu as well as Hutu who are originally Tutsi (one or two generations).”²⁴⁵ Without any opposition between the two reports, we can see how two French military actors in the same place observe completely different things.

On 21 June, according to Colonel Rosier, the tension in Zaire was palpable, and it seems that questions were being asked about the French military project.²⁴⁶ A zone was reserved for the French operation.²⁴⁷ The colonel tried to obtain the available fuel reserves from both the airport authorities and Mobil.²⁴⁸ At the same time, exchanges with “military authorities” led to the conclusion that a precise reconnaissance of the Bukavu runway, like that of Kisangani, was unnecessary.²⁴⁹ In this context, on 22 June, he received very clear orders from Paris for the days of 22 June and especially 23 June.²⁵⁰ They established, on the one hand, that it was not possible to enter Rwanda on the 22nd and, on the other hand, that the arrival at Cyangugu was very important for France. The objective was explicitly the protection of the Tutsi, in particular against the militias.²⁵¹ On 22 June, Colonel Rosier drew up an initial order for the special forces operators under his command, and instructed them to position themselves in Bukavu between 22 and 23 June in order to be in a position to obey the orders that he was given on the 21st.²⁵² However, a refusal by the Russian pilots of

the Antonovs, chartered by the French Ministry of Defense to transport the heavy cargo necessary for Operation Turquoise, threatened the deployment of the first French units in Rwanda²⁵³; this risked compromising the initial deployment schedule, unless COS²⁵⁴ aircraft were used.

It was necessary to carry out reconnaissance operations, to stop the massacres and to make contact with the local authorities.

Reconnaissance of the terrain

At 9:30 p.m. on 22 June, Colonel Rosier reported on the situation, but above all on his plans for the following day. He stated his intention to “start from the Bukavu area with a detachment of the 1st RPIMa (motorized), followed by a light HQ with a small reserve (GSIGN), also motorized.”²⁵⁵ Its objective was to reach Cyangugu quickly.²⁵⁶ On the morning of 23 June, air rotations enabled the first COS teams to be deployed in Bukavu, but without a large number of vehicles.²⁵⁷ This absence no doubt explains a message sent to General Le Page at 12.30 p.m. from the Bukavu airfield, in which he proposed two hypotheses for entering the country.²⁵⁸ The first allowed entry at 3 p.m. by road with about forty personnel but without a reserve and therefore “without the possibility of reacting in the event of an incident,” and the second allowed entry at 5.30 p.m. with a helicopter reserve of about forty personnel.²⁵⁹ In the end, it appears that the colonel chose the first option, since at 6:30 p.m. an update from the Special Operations Command showed that most of the personnel had been deployed, except for 63 who were still in transit.²⁶⁰ 121 personnel were positioned in Bukavu, including all of the marine commandos, the airborne parachutist commandos and the GSIGN detachment. Only 43 personnel from the 1st Marine Infantry Parachute Regiment under the command of Colonel Tauzin are in Cyangugu.²⁶¹ It should be noted that this number of personnel includes a team of eight parachute dragoons and a signal detachment.²⁶²

In the spirit of the maneuver conceived in Paris, it was not possible to leave the French operators in Rwanda for long during their

incursions. On 24 June, in a directive that he sent to Colonel Rosier, the head of the COIA was formal: it was not necessary to remain static.²⁶³ In accordance with the letter of the instructions, on the one hand, some forty personnel were kept in Rwanda in the evening, without specifying their location, but they seemed to be the same as those who had been in Cyangugu the day before. On the other hand, there was a pendulum movement between Rwanda and the base in Bukavu.²⁶⁴ Thus, if at 4 p.m. 132 special forces operators were in Rwanda, by 6 p.m. there were only 40. This post-meridian variation is evidence of a strategy of incursion for reconnaissance purposes without remaining on the ground - with the exception of this forty or so men, which is similar in volume to that of the previous day. In a message he sent to General Le Page at 3:45 p.m. on 24 June, Colonel Rosier confirmed this strategy of one-off incursions into Rwanda: "With the exception of the element of the 1st RPIMa, which remains in Cyangugu, I have given orders to the other elements that crossed the border today to return to Bukavu."²⁶⁵ A COS staffing table dated 25 June at 5 p.m. confirms the continuity of this strategy, since at the end of the afternoon, only 43 operators remained in Cyangugu, the 152 others having returned to Bukavu.²⁶⁶

On the evening of 24 June, in a directive that he sent to Colonel Rosier, General Régault confirmed that the policy that the COS was to follow in Rwanda was that of one-off lighting operations. He thus confirmed his general mission: "Ensure that your detachment is back in condition, while carrying out specific actions in Rwanda aimed at continuing your contacts and clarifying the information obtained during the day of 24 June."²⁶⁷

Making contact with the local authorities

The COS also served as an intermediary and as the first contact on the ground with the members of the Interim Government. This was one of the primary missions of the COS, as Admiral Lanxade reminded General Lafourcade on 17 June in the personal directives he sent him.²⁶⁸ In this spirit, Colonel Rosier received precise orders on 22 June 1994: a message signed by General Regnault was faxed to General Le Page at 3:45 p.m.²⁶⁹ In his memo, the head of the COIA asked the colonel to "make contact with the FAR

in the most discreet manner possible and without any publicity in order to seek intelligence.”²⁷⁰ It was undoubtedly in the context of this instruction that Colonel Rosier met not only with military personnel but also with political personnel from the IRG.

On the morning of 23 June, Colonel Rosier reports an initial meeting he had during the night with the FAR sector chief of Gisenyi, former head of intelligence of the FAR general staff: “He assured me that the FAR and the population were waiting for us with great hope and that everything would be done to facilitate our mission. His version of the massacres is not the one we read in our newspapers. This is particularly true in the east of the country, where, under the pretext of liberation, the RPF did not go easy on the people.”²⁷¹

The accumulation of orders that the first French troops received made it possible to refine the maneuver, but also made it more complex. Thus, the order that Colonel Rosier received from Paris for the day of 24 June invited him to continue his reconnaissance and contacts with all the parties, but reminded him that the priority remained humanitarian intelligence:

*Congratulate you on the initial action. Ask you to continue by focusing on contacts with local leaders and the two ethnic groups, while ensuring strict neutrality. Your priority mission remains humanitarian intelligence in order to facilitate the mission of military doctors and NGOs upon their arrival.*²⁷²

While on the one hand, Colonel Rosier was primarily responsible for gathering intelligence through contact with FAR officers, the advance of COS units brought operators into contact with local political and administrative authorities. Thus, on 24 June, a mixed team composed of paratroopers from the 13th RDP and gendarmes from the GSIGN undertook a reconnaissance along the Gishoma-Bugarama axis; at each stage, they were welcomed by the local authorities.²⁷³ In Gishoma, the prefect designates an adversary because he feared “infiltration by Tutsi rebels from Burundi, who had been active in his commune until March 1994.” In this commune, the population organized itself into a militia. In Gishoma, the prefect, who had been informed by telephone, organized a welcoming committee for the French soldiers with “a veritable ovation with flags, signs, flower throwing and songs waiting for us at the village gate.”²⁷⁴ The prefect “asked

outright how many soldiers France was planning to put at the Burundian border to protect them. As elsewhere, the population had formed militias, and the prefect asked for arms to equip them.”²⁷⁵ The French soldiers appeared to be quite lucid from the outset about the local authorities they met: “There were 240 Tutsi in Bugarama before the war, the prefect does not know what has become of them today. When asked about the presence of a radio in town, he denied it.”²⁷⁶ When they made contact with the Rwandan authorities in place, the operators immediately noted traces of massacres. Thus, Colonel Tauzin’s men reported that in Nyarushishi they had observed mass graves containing around 80 bodies.²⁷⁷

On 25 June, Colonel Rosier reported to General Le Page his meeting with the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who tried to distance themselves from the question of genocide: “The assassination of the president created a real shock and triggered the massacres (which they did not deny). They emphasized their efforts to contain and then control this initially unstoppable outburst: regrouping the displaced, protection by the gendarmerie.”²⁷⁸ Then they told the colonel how desperate their military situation was and how much they were counting on the help of France, in particular to obtain ammunition for the 105 mm guns:

*I replied that it seemed illusory to expect such help in the current context. They looked disappointed by my answer and told me that they were planning to use mercenaries (Captain Barril contacted). Furthermore, I told them that it would be catastrophic for their image if other massacres took place. Finally, they appointed me as the FAR liaison officer with COMFORCE, the head of the Gisenyi sector.*²⁷⁹

If, for the French officer, dialogue with the two ministers seemed possible,²⁸⁰ on the ground, the French commandos also noted a transformation of the Rwandan administrative apparatus and the troubled relationship between the administration, the militias and the army. Colonel Tauzin regularly noted this in his reports. On 25 June, he pointed out the discrepancies between the administrative and military systems. He reported that, during a meeting with the bishop of Butare in the presence of Cardinal Etchegarray, the latter described “the bilateral mistrust between the prefect and the military, but all are afraid of the militias.”²⁸¹ On the 28th, he noted that “the militias were dissolved and civil defense groups were created in each commune.”²⁸²

In the same report, he also emphasized the hold of the militias on the administrative apparatus, since a reconnaissance of the Sonayire region revealed that the burgomaster was “under the control of Bandeste Édouard.”²⁸³ At the same time, the Air Force paratroopers made the same observations, filmed by an ECPA team: in the Kibuye region, by making contact with the local authorities, they were able to see - without necessarily being able to fully measure it at this stage - the entanglement between the administration, embodied by the sub-prefect whom they were trying to meet, and the militias.²⁸⁴

The observation that the militias posed a threat to the population, and first and foremost to the Tutsi, very quickly reached the top of the French military staff. Thus, on 25 June, in a memo addressed to the political level, Admiral Lanxade reported that “the refugee camps are densely populated, in a variety of sanitary conditions, but they are always under the threat of abuse by the militia bands.”²⁸⁵

5.3.2.2 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FRENCH COMMAND OF OPERATION TURQUOISE

From 25 June,²⁸⁶ the command of Operation Turquoise arrived in Goma and took into account all the units already present. With the arrival of General Lafourcade, the entire joint theater command post (PCIAT) was deployed. This deployment marked the beginning of an important documentary production that was divided into several series. The series of daily situation memos was sent by the intelligence office or 2nd office of the PCIAT in Goma, to the SITU[ation] office of the sub-directorate for operations (SDE) of the military intelligence directorate (DRM).²⁸⁷ These memos therefore feed into the DRM's situation memos, with a one-day delay. These situation reports also feed into those presented by the Armed Forces Staff. In addition to these reports, which he usually co-signs with his head of intelligence, the general commanding the Turquoise force also produces a document for the joint operations center, which sends it to the deputy chief of operations, the army major general and the chief of the armed forces staff.²⁸⁸ In addition, every week, General Lafourcade, commander of the Turquoise force or COMFOR, produces a summary of the

force's activities from 3 July, 1994 until the departure of the French elements from Rwanda.²⁸⁹ In addition to this regular correspondence from General Lafourcade, there are also more occasional letters, such as the one dated 8 August, in which he sends an update on the situation directly to the EMA's deputy chief of operations.²⁹⁰ General Lafourcade's staff also sent a daily report to Paris on the activities of the Turquoise force, summarizing the intelligence and activities of the French units.²⁹¹ Air assets were set up in Goma for transport and the Atlantic aircraft of the French navy, and in Kisangani for the fighter force; this set-up was accompanied by a command structure within the PCIAT from 25 June. The latter produced documentation on its activities through periodic reports until 11 August.²⁹² In parallel, the establishment of a humanitarian structure led to the production, on a much more occasional basis, of a humanitarian intelligence bulletin.²⁹³ At the same time, fed by this information, the joint operations center, which ensured operational follow-up, produced news memos on the operation and its environment, initially under the stamp of its Africa unit, then under that of a dedicated crisis unit.²⁹⁴

During this period, many problems, both military and political, had to be dealt with by specific orders. Thus, on 26 June, General Germanos emphasized in a memo to the office of the Minister of Defense that the question of the fate of foreign nationals encountered by French troops in "Hutu country" and who asked to be evacuated had to be resolved at the political level. It should be noted that the zone of action of the Turquoise force is referred to by the deputy head of operations in a memo to the office of the Minister of Defense as "Hutu country."²⁹⁵

5.3.3 Recognizing the victims in Rwanda: French logic at Bisesero

The Bisesero massacres perpetrated by extremist Hutu militias against Tutsi civilians taking refuge on a hillside took place at the time of the first deployments in Rwanda in the framework of Operation Turquoise. Considering the mandate given to France and the resulting written orders of operation, which made stopping the massacres one of the priority objectives of French troops, the

co-occurrence of these massacres and the French military presence raised questions about the actions and, hence, about the French objectives during Operation Turquoise. It is therefore appropriate to return more specifically to the way in which Bisesero, the area, the refugee populations and the massacres were taken into account by the French military apparatus throughout the period.

5.3.3.1 AN UNCERTAIN AREA

As early as 6 June, 1994, when a French operation was not yet underway, the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DRM) mentioned Bisesero as an area that could house 1,000 Tutsi.²⁹⁶ However, this geographical precision is gradually lost in the reports and instructions that follow. The toponym Bisesero was replaced by a broader indication that was regularly repeated - the Gisovu-Karangi-Gishita triangle - and appeared in an irregular manner.²⁹⁷

On 27 June, information reached the French command in Goma, and then quickly the COIA (center for joint operations) in Paris, that fighting was taking place in the area. The messages from the command in Goma to Paris signaled an incident worthy of note.²⁹⁸ The information was then taken up by the operations center in Paris, where its uncertainty was emphasized.²⁹⁹ In the evening, in their daily summary, the commanders of Goma reported that the fighting was taking place in the area. In the evening, in their daily summary, General Lafourcade and Lieutenant-Colonel Lebel, in charge of intelligence, noted the event that had occurred in the morning: "On the 27th around 11 a.m. on the Gishyita side Hutu militiamen and mercenaries attacked Tutsi. And bands of armed youths seen in Mukamura."³⁰⁰ Their version is not different from the morning's message; this similarity shows the absence of new information. From Goma to Paris, the analysis did not vary and a press briefing reported: "civilian populations are said to be taking refuge in the triangle of Gisovu, Mount Karangi and East Gishita."³⁰¹ At 5 p.m. in Paris, another report stated: "At around 11 a.m., a strong element of around one hundred armed militiamen supervised by soldiers attacked a hill in the Gisovu region, 25 km south of Kibuye; 200 Tutsi originating from the commune were grouped together in the area and were being threatened by Hutu."³⁰² Until further information, there is no document in the archives that instructs Lieutenant-Colonel Duval's Air Force parachute commando detachment

to go and gather this information on the ground. However, we can assume that this is why they were sent on reconnaissance.³⁰³ The next day, the Parisian staff clarified its analysis of the situation for the Minister of Defense, who was preparing to come to the scene:

*On the morning of the 27th, an incident pitted Hutu militiamen (supported by soldiers) against armed men dispersed in groups in the Gishyitamont-Karongi and Gisovu triangle. It could be either RPF elements that infiltrated at night from Gitarama or, more likely, Tutsi refugees who had fled the April massacres and were seeking to defend themselves on the spot.*³⁰⁴

At this stage, the analyses carried out in Paris reveal two major characteristics: on the one hand, the analysts believe that the fighting was more than just massacres, and on the other, that there is a possibility that the fighting was carried out by RPF soldiers. This last mention of RPF infiltration echoes the French concern not to confront the RPF directly and, at the same time, to systematically associate it with the technique of infiltration. Thus, the DRM expressed this fear as early as 24 June: “The RPF has heavy weapons (RPG 7 mortars, MRL and recoilless cannon) but no ground-to-air missiles have been observed in its ranks. It uses the technique of infiltration by moving small groups of five to six fighters into FAR zones.”³⁰⁵

5.3.3.2 ASSESSING THE 27 JUNE SITUATION: AN INTELLIGENCE PROBLEM

These data led elements of the COS to search for intelligence on the ground. Thus, on the morning of 28 June, Colonel Rosier, commander of the special operations group that had been conducting a reconnaissance operation in Rwanda since 23 June, received a report from Commander Marin Gillier, who commanded a detachment of Marine commandos and a few gendarmes. He reported on the situation in Bisesero (Tanguy was the code name for the RPF):

Finally, the area of Gishyita called Bisesero was largely infiltrated by Tanguy³⁰⁶ to the point that local forces and political authorities avoided venturing there. Tanguy Action

*From the heights that join Gisivu to Mount Karongi, Tanguy carries out two types of actions:
To spread terror among the population, which flees without trying to defend itself: its actions allow them to
search for food, which they seem to lack.
Infiltration in the coastal region to gather intelligence and try to rally elements to its cause.³⁰⁷*

This description includes the events of the morning of the 27th. These are presented as an assault by the FAR, some of whose members were reportedly in civilian clothes, against what he believes to be members of the RPF or, more broadly, Tutsi fighters. Gillier notes that the local population was “particularly angry with the Tanguy and carried out armed patrols and did not hesitate to launch revenge raids.”³⁰⁸ He thus seems to describe the raids against the Tutsi of Bisesero as a consequence of RPF military activity. This analysis is due to the fact that his informants were the mayor of Gishyita, Charles Sikubwabo, and the Minister of Information, Eliezer Niyitegeka, who was present on the spot (he was from there); the latter “gave instructions to facilitate our action and to ensure that our questions were answered.”³⁰⁹ Gillier’s report concludes with a recommendation that is in line with the intelligence he has at his disposal: “any penetration of French troops into Bisesero must be done in force, multiple sources have warned. The burgomaster was ready to provide us with “guides.”³¹⁰

On the morning of 28 June, Colonel Rosier thus received information that described Bisesero as an area of confrontation between the Rwandan Armed Forces, undoubtedly accompanied by militiamen, and Tutsi perceived as possibly being members of the RPF. This information may seem consistent with all of the above. The credibility given to the intelligence provided by two pillars of the ruling power to Marin Gillier is not questioned, in large part because it also corresponds to a modus operandi desired by the special operations command. Thus, in a preparatory memo of 15 June on “employment hypotheses,” hypothesis 1 is proposed as a “flexible engagement, politically obtaining the agreement in principle of the FAR” which is opposed to an engagement in force, but which supposes “convincing the FAR that we are coming to help them recreate

a situation conducive to the restoration of peace (cooperative approach).”³¹¹ Proximity with the administration and the FAR is therefore desired.

However, there is doubt, at least at the level of the commander of the Turquoise force. Indeed, from the evening of 27 June, based on what he knew of Bisesero, General Lfourcade expressed doubts about the reliability of the information obtained from the Rwandan administrative authorities:

The Hutu militias and the military in the western region seem to be very interested in this problem; they announce the arrival of the RPF.

It could be either RPF elements infiltrated at night from Gitarama who could be trying to cut the area in two. Or Tutsi who have fled the threats of April and are seeking to defend themselves on the spot. I am leaning towards the latter hypothesis.

In this case, the risks are as follows:

Conducting a reconnaissance with Hutu “guides” and being accused of collaboration with the FAR;

Doing a reconnaissance alone with the risk of running into the RPF;

Doing nothing and letting massacres take place behind our backs.

*My intention for the next two days is to try to clarify this information without venturing into the area.*³¹²

In the reasoning that the General gave to his leaders, two elements clashed: the concern to go to the area where massacres were being perpetrated - with the idea that they might be carried out on orders or by Rwandan authorities - and the risk of coming into contact with the RPF. Indeed, the fear of infiltration by RPF troops, which was no doubt acquired during the training of the FAR by French troops, is very present at the highest level of the French state, as attested to by a memo from General Quesnot on 28 June describing this technique as being specific to the RPF;³¹³ it was mentioned the next day in the core cabinet meeting, a sign of the influence of this memo.³¹⁴ In the reasoning of the Chief of Staff, these two considerations combined justify caution and therefore the slowness to penetrate the zone. Added to this was the concern already widely expressed in the orders from Paris from the very first hours of the operation: not to remain on the ground; something that General Lfourcade also reminded his men of on 28 June: “Be careful not to give the impression that you are establishing yourself in a lasting way in an area where you have to leave elements for very short periods of time.”³¹⁵ The search for intelligence, which General Lfourcade wanted, was put on the operational agenda,

as indicated in Paris in the daily report produced by the Operation Turquoise monitoring unit: "In the center, in the more sensitive Kibuye sector (with an intelligence effort on the Gisovu-Karongi-Gishyita triangle)."³¹⁶

There is a different analysis of the situation. This was carried out by Air Force personnel belonging to CPA 10 under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Duval. The latter wrote a report on his observations made on 27 June but did not send it until the 29th:

Mission of 27 06 94

Reconnaissance of the route Kibuye Gishyita RAS

Reconnaissance of the Bisesero sector east of Gishyita for 6 km accompanied by a civilian from Muguba plus journalists from Le Figaro, Libération and RFI. In the Bisesero sector, we met about a hundred Tutsi refugees in the mountains. They came forward spontaneously on the trail when they saw the military vehicles. There are about 2,000 of them hiding in the woods.

According to them, the Tutsi are being hunted every day by elements of the army, the gendarmerie, and the militias that surround the population.

They showed us dead bodies from the day before and the day of, including a child wounded - tendons - from the day's fighting. They are in a state of nutritional, sanitary and medical destitution.

They have directly implicated the local authorities of Kibuye as participants in the manhunt.

They were hoping for our immediate protection or their transfer to a protected area.

I (?) could only promise them that we would return and that humanitarian aid would arrive soon.

This is an emergency situation that will lead to extermination if a humanitarian structure is not quickly put in place or at least the means to stop these manhunts.

It should be noted that a vehicle containing FAR soldiers passed without stopping and that it displayed a large French flag on the hood.

The reports in Le Figaro and Libération appeared on the front page on 29 June.³¹⁷

The integration of information takes time between the field and Paris. The representation of the 27th still seems to persist on 28 June in a memo from the DRM.³¹⁸ The shift in the French analysis of the situation in Bisesero took place gradually during the day of 28 June 1994.³¹⁹ First of all, the intelligence obtained by the commando-marines made it possible to cast serious doubt on the credibility of their Rwandan interlocutors. Thus, during the day, a message from Omar (Trepel commando) underlined the ambiguity of his interlocutor, who appeared to be what he

was: a combatant seeking help from the French and their army. It seems likely to Commander Gillier that Tutsi are being massacred: "This morning around 10 a.m., a hundred or so eagles³²⁰ would have penetrated the Bisesero area where 300 to 500 falcons were said to be hiding in the tunnels of a tin mine at the eastern exit of the neighborhood."³²¹ This message constitutes, despite the systematic use of the conditional, the most precise description obtained at this stage of the location of the Tutsi under threat. The source of the intelligence thus appears - in retrospect - to be well informed. However, the use of the conditional tense also attests to the naval officer's doubts. At the same time, Marin Gillier's message reveals the intentions of his institutional interlocutor: "The burgomaster of Gishyita seems more and more eager to launch offensives and is openly asking for our help in penetrating Bisesero and eliminating the elements that are terrorizing the population there."³²²

Commander Gillier reported the requests made to him by the burgomaster of Gishyita, his source of information since the previous day.³²³ He emphasized that he was bringing to the attention of the soldiers the need to protect the population. By emphasizing that he gave dilatory answers to his requests, he showed his refusal to engage in what seemed to imply opposition to the RPF and which would go beyond the mandate given to the French forces. At the same time, since the terms referring to the Tutsi and the RPF are strictly distinguished in his message, he may still be under the illusion that, when the burgomaster asks for military means, these will not be used to continue the genocide. In spite of this, he seems to be very well informed about the reality of the massacres, without being able to name the perpetrators with precision. The concern for a dilatory response can therefore be explained by the perspective given to the COS operators since the beginning of the engagement: to seek information from the administrative authorities in place.³²⁴

5.3.3.3 ACTION

29 June was another turning point in the French analysis of the situation in Bisesero.³²⁵ During the day, Commander Gillier, who was approaching the zone, had a team of marine commandos and gendarmes, but above all elements of the 13th parachute dragoon regiment who had joined his troop the day before, infiltrate the area.³²⁶

At the end of the day, the situation in Paris became clearer. Bisesero begins to exist in a working document of the DRM making an inventory of all the sites where populations are threatened: "Two thousand Tutsi civilians are waiting there for the protection of the French force, in a state of extreme nutritional, sanitary and medical destitution."³²⁷ The DRM therefore reported on the attack of the 27th and identified the perpetrators.³²⁸ This memo integrates the intelligence of Air Force personnel from CPA 10. The figure of 2,000 Tutsi, which is the one provided by Lieutenant-Colonel Duval, is thus noted, as is the definitive change of place name with the mention of Bisesero. Finally, contrary to the version of events provided by Marin Gillier, there is no longer any ambiguity as to the fact that there was no fighting between members of the RPF and soldiers of the FAR, but only murderous expeditions. In the same vein, a memo of 2 July summarizing the affair seems to make a very clear assessment of Bisesero.³²⁹ Its final commentary sketches out a radical form of updating:

*The 5,000 to 10,000 Tutsi who lived in Kibuye province before the events were decimated by Hutu militiamen. The survivors took refuge in the hills and tried to escape the "manhunt" operations organized by the militias. When the French announced their arrival, the burgomaster of Gishyita stepped up the actions, calling on the militias of Kibuye. According to a French priest, there are no RPF in the district. The Tutsi living in the hills are not affiliated with the RPF.*³³⁰

Afterwards, on 30 June, in two successive messages, an officer from the DGSE commented on the circulation of information between the different components of the French forces: "The COS tends not to pass on its elements of the situation to the B2, which makes it difficult to make an overall assessment."³³¹ In a correction to this same message, the officer emphasized that the difficulties in integrating intelligence specifically concerned Bisesero: "The RPF infiltrations south of Kibuye are not yet reliable information. The wounded recovered by the COS are said to be Tutsi who have taken refuge in the mountains and are being hunted by the militias."³³²

Although the constraints weighing on the French actors are heavy - poor integration of intelligence, military capabilities that are still limited, concern about respecting orders received from the political authorities - the reality remains: in the face of the objective of saving the victims of the massacres,

Bisesero is both a failure and a tragedy. Even though the collective awareness of the French commanders was gradual, Bisesero was a turning point in the awareness of the genocide. There is a before and after Bisesero. Peripheral testimonies also point to the importance of the event. For example, the psychiatrist, COMFOR's advisor for mental health, whose mission lasted from 27 July to 27 August, 1994, and who intervened essentially in Goma, mentions it as one of the first events that marked the soldiers of the PCIAT.³³³

5.3.4 Another look at the beginnings of Turquoise: the ECPAD audiovisual archives

It was on 21 June, 1994 that the ECPA team (the acronym of the establishment in 1994) received the order to go on a reporting mission to Rwanda to cover Operation Turquoise. Without any psychological preparation or information on the situation in the country, the five men³³⁴ who made up the team embarked with other soldiers of the operation on 23 June. They reached Goma the next day, via Libreville,³³⁵ for a 36-day filming mission, from 25 June to 28 July. They were relieved by a second team in mid-August, which was operational until 5 September. Their main mission: to film as much as possible of the Turquoise forces in action in Rwanda.

During these two months, the two teams shot more than 36 hours of rushes,³³⁶ which are now digitized and preserved by ECPAD. This collection of footage forms a rich corpus of unpublished archives, offering the researcher an additional dimension of incarnation of the actors and events.

In his end-of-mission report, the operator chief warrant officer reports that, from 25 June to 1 July 1994, his team was caught "in the turmoil of the 'media maneuver'." By this he means an approach that "was intended to publicize Operation Turquoise and to try to channel the movements of the press in the field."³³⁷ Indeed, much more than during the two previous external operations in Rwanda, the military and political authorities decided to give high visibility to the French intervention. More

than fifty French and foreign journalists were convoyed, supervised, fed and housed under the responsibility of the French army for several weeks.³³⁸ A press that was omnipresent in the theaters of operation, that proved on several occasions to be better informed than the actors of Turquoise, and whose views and judgments were able to influence decision-making. This was an unprecedented situation for the French soldiers, who complained about it on several occasions in footage shot by the ECPA team.

From 25 June to 3 July, the film crew was based at Bukavu airport in Zaire, the southern group of the Turquoise operation. From there, it spread out autonomously in the southwestern part of Rwanda, at the goodwill of the COS authorities, but without any assigned protection means. The team was particularly interested in the various refugee camps that were scattered throughout the area.³³⁹ In the first few days of its mission, it did an extraordinary job of documenting the setting up of the military operation. But even more so - although it was not really prepared for it - on the places, the traces, the actors and the victims of the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda.

5.3.4.1 COLLECTING THE TESTIMONY OF WITNESSES TO THE GENOCIDE: THE SISTERS OF ST. MARY OF KIBUYE

On the morning of Sunday, 26 June, 1994, on the third day of Operation Turquoise, Colonel Jacques Rosier, commander of the COS detachment, was airlifted from Bukavu to Kibuye to supervise the installation of one of his three operational groups in a convent of nuns. The 35 men of CPA 10, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Duval, took up residence in the premises of the Missionary Congregation of the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur. The ECPA team accompanied the detachment and decided to interview two sisters from the convent who had witnessed the Kibuye massacres. Colonel Rosier had spoken to them at length beforehand.

Sister Roberta Farrington is the Superior General of the Congregation of St. Mary who, after many trips and numerous approaches to the Rwandan and then French authorities, notably in Gisenyi and Goma, obtained the protection of the French forces of Turquoise. With a poor command of French, she seems very reserved but

carefully controls the words she says. At her side throughout the meeting was the nun in charge of the convent in Kibuye, Sister Marianne Ketels. She is a French-speaking Belgian, with a great deal of experience in the “field” since she has been in mission in Rwanda for more than thirty years. Present in Kibuye since the beginning of the genocide, she lived for nearly three months in fear and the echoes of the massacres. Very marked by the events, she is nonetheless particularly expressive and voluble in front of the camera.

From the second day of its intervention, Operation Turquoise deployed significant military resources to secure and then evacuate the community of the nuns of St. Mary. As early as Friday, 24 June - the day after the French military entered Rwanda - a detachment of special forces commandos, accompanied by the prefect of Kibuye, had come to do an initial reconnaissance of the convent, without leaving any men behind. The Turquoise authorities gave high visibility to this security/evacuation operation, which they seemed to want to make a symbol, an initial “showcase” for its “strictly humanitarian” mission.

This desire is manifested in particular by the ECPA’s steady filming of this long meeting. It is shot in the convent’s garden - in front of lush vegetation and amidst birdsong.

Q: And these workers that you haven’t seen again, do you think that ... that they were murdered?

Sister Ketels (SK): Oh yes, because the other workers told us so. They were... The other workers told us what happened... Every morning they would tell. So then. The poor people...were there.

Q: Can you name some of the places where there were these killings?

SK: Ah what we heard, we others, is that we... We had refugees here too, and we were told to send them to the stadium...or to the church.

Q: Yes...

SK: And that they would be taken care of there... (She looks intensely at the interviewer without finishing her sentence, pursing her lips).

Q: And how many refugees were there at the stadium and at the church?

SK: It was the workers told us that, the people that told us that. In the stadium there were 5,000 ... and in the church 3,000 or so, yes, who were probably all murdered³⁴⁰ (she turns her head, her gaze lost in the void).

SK: *We heard a lot of shooting, eh, a lot, a lot...*

Q: *And since then you haven't seen your... the workers?*

SK: *Oh no... (sighing, with a strained smile). We haven't seen our workers again (she shakes her head, her eyes misty).*

(...)

Q: *People have seen dead bodies ... ?*

SK: *Oh yes! People saw dead bodies! Our workers had to go and help even, to clear...*

Q: *But that's about 8,000 people dead. Were they all buried?*

SK: *(making a strange pout, shaking her head): I think so, I think so... (she turns to the Mother Superior to ask for her approval).*

SK: *Yes ... We made mass graves, right. We dug big holes...*

(she looks down, tight-lipped, obviously disturbed).

(...)

Q: *Mainly the people who were therefore, a priori murdered, were from which ethnic group?*

SK: *Oh! ... (she sighs, looking at the Mother Superior, then suddenly speaks very low) ... They are Tutsi, aren't they...*

Q: *Tutsi?*

SK: *Oh yes! But yes ... but yes...*

Q: *And the Tutsi population was significant in the village?*

SK: *Yes, yes, yes, many... in this region. There are a lot... in this region especially... What percent, I don't know anymore but... (she turns to her superior who is framed by the camera).*

SF: *Yes, but you see the Huts are probably much more numerous, but ... probably right?*

SK (voice-over): *This is a strong region, a strong Tutsi percentage here, yes, yes ... In our mission of Mubuga also, right ... In the church 3,000 too ... Tutsi killed*

... (she turns again to Sister Farrington, visibly upset)

(...)

Q: *The village authorities are ethnic Hutu, I believe? (the camera widens the field to frame the two sisters together).*

SK *(she turns to the Mother Superior, still looking worried):*

Hmm, hmm... yes, yes ...

Q: *And they couldn't prevent that? They couldn't prevent the massacre?*

SK: *(she makes a puzzled pout, surprised by the question, turns back to Sister Farrington): I don't know what to say... (she nods, and makes a helpless gesture with her hands).*

Sister Farrington (SF): *We can't know, we... we are*

in this little... (she gestures to draw a circle with her hands). We are not informed...it's up to God to...

SK: We don't know, we don't know... (turns her head to the other side, worried and embarrassed. The camera moves closer to her to frame her in a close-up) (...)

SK: They came a whole gang of young people, armed young people with machetes and all that ... To see if we had any Tutsi hidden (she immediately recovers), well if we were hiding people... Ah, they came to see...

Q: They came to see?

SK: Oh yes, oh yes, yes... (shaking her head and looking down).

Q: Did they treat you well?

SK: Yes, yes, yes... (nodding, Sister Farrington agrees) ... They were very... very nice to us. And we left them free, they went in everywhere, everywhere... Yes...

Q: And these were youth from where? Where did they come from, these young people?

SF: We don't know them!

SK: From the hills I guess, I guess... I didn't know them... (she shakes her head).

Q: They were not from the village?

SF: We don't know...

SK: Well, from the hills, here... They were from everywhere (the camera turns to Sister Farrington who speaks).

SF: Here we never talk about a village, it's always a hill... (she points in front of her)... instead of the village, it's a hill.

Q: Oh right, yes...

SF: This is the hill of Kibuye.

SK: We were afraid naturally, right, for our sisters, but they were... I think they had a recommendation from the prefect not to touch the sisters.

SF: Yes, we were protected, yes, yes...

SK: Yes, we were protected by the prefect,³⁴¹ that's a truth, that!

Q: Is that sure?

SK: Absolutely! ...

Q: Among the kids who came to search the bow... the buildings, did you see people, young people that you had already helped a few years ago?

SK: Yes, yes, there were people we knew (looking at the Mother Superior)... There were young people we knew...

Q: That must have been heart-breaking, right?

SK (loudly, again turning around): Oh, how!!! We were overwhelmed! ... But there they had to do eh ... they had to follow their leader. I don't know, they were forced...

Q: So well-organized militias are...

SK (nodding): *Yes, yes, yes...*

SF (off, addressing Sister Ketels): *Don't say things too quickly!* [cut filming].

SK (looking at her superior): *How do you want to think of something...* (with a moved voice, she lowers her head, closes her eyes, and shakes her head. Silence. She takes a deep breath). *All our people, all our friends, all our hard-working neighbors, all that...but finally...* (lost look, misty, full of emotion, turns her head away).

Zoom in and close-up on Sister Ketels. She looks at the camera, and ends up smiling.

End of the filmed meeting.³⁴²

This interview, despite its unspoken words³⁴³ and its gray areas, provides the soldiers of Operation Turquoise with important information on the extent of the massacres of civilians; but also on the clear identification of the executioners (Hutu) and the victims (Tutsi). It denies the involvement, even indirectly, of the RPF in these massacres, which are reported by the sisters as mass killings of Tutsi civilians, not combatants.

On the other hand, the filmed meeting does not provide any information or understanding of the organization and organizers of the genocide (the term is never used by the operators during their interviews in the field). In particular, the role of Prefect Kayishema is reduced to that of “protector” of the mission by the two sisters, even though they undoubtedly have much less positive information about him, especially Sister Farrington. Finally, this interview seems to confirm the real danger of the situation experienced by the nuns and the justified need for protection by the French soldiers of Turquoise.

5.3.4.2 HEARING FROM THE VICTIMS OF THE GENOCIDE: A REFUGEE FROM THE NYARUSHISHI CAMP

On 26 June, the ECPA team went to the largest refugee camp in Rwanda at the time, Nyarushishi camp. Located in the extreme southwest of the territory, housing more than eight thousand mainly Tutsi refugees, the Turquoise forces took control of it on the first day, 23 June, under the responsibility of Colonel Didier Tauzin.

After a filmed exploration of this immense camp set up by the ICRC, the ECPA operators chose to set up their camera

to interview a first refugee. Framed on one of the large dirt roads that crisscross the camp, the interviewee is a tall, skinny man in his thirties, wearing a red cap and a worn, dusty jacket. He speaks slowly, with a very measured tone, expressing himself in hesitant but emotionally charged French. In spite of communication difficulties, during this meeting he demonstrates precise and coherent thought, which on several occasions surprises his interlocutors. This is the first time in their mission³⁴⁴ that the ECPA operators have filmed the testimony of a Tutsi survivor and have made his voice heard. They will do so less and less during the rest of their mission.

Q: And you feel more reassured with French soldiers?

A: We were so happy...

Q: Yes?

A: Yes, because otherwise ... There is peace here now ... We were brought peace, they protect us well! (he supports with his voice this expression)... We sleep, we eat the corn and the bread that they give us. It is good! (...)

Q: What city do you come from?

A: We come from Cyangugu. Here! (pressing the word, and pointing to the ground)

Q: So you are from the region?

A: Yes, we are from the region, yes! ... (pointing to the ground) this is our community...

Q: And why did you come to the camp?

A: This is our region... We were chased away!

Q: You were hunted³⁴⁵ by the other villagers?

A: Yes, yes ... trained by this present government.

Q: By the ?

A: Trained by this current government!

Q: Oh, right... So these are the militias that were trained by the military of the Rwandan Armed Forces guard, right?

A: Yes, yes ... to hunt us. It seems that the villagers ... You know that there was, there is a multi-party system here in Rwanda.

Q: Yes.

A: There are the opposition parties and there was the party of the President of the Republic.

Q: Yes...

A: Like the Burundians... [Several unintelligible words] They were saying that we are Inkotanyi³⁴⁶ when we don't even know them... We didn't even see any Inkotanyi passing by... We are not Inkotanyi! ... We

are villagers (widening our eyes). *We are not... We are not politicians, we are not military. We don't know what Inkotanyi are... We're just waiting for the RPF, but we don't know, we don't know anymore.*

Q: Oh, right, yes ...

A: (speaking much lower) We, we are of the Tutsi ethnic group... They say that the RPF are the Tutsi who attacked the country... So, but we don't know anymore. So they started to hunt us like that.

Q: Oh, okay. You have no sympathy for the RPF?

A: Here in the interior of the country?

Q: Yes.

A (shaking his head): No, there is no RPF here in the interior! (...) We didn't know the RPF people, because they didn't hold any meetings. We only hear what's on the radio ...

Q: Yes.

A: ...we don't know anymore.

(...)

Q: But who hunted you?

A: They are... They are villagers, even supported by the authorities because... Those who died, there are no investigations that we have... that are followed

Q: And which villagers hunted you?

A: It is the mass of the Hutu ethnic group (these last two words are pronounced very low by the Tutsi refugee).

Q: From...?

A: Of the Hutu ethnic group!

Q: So you are Tutsi?

A: Yes! (he presses the word while widening his eyes)... [silence] ...

(...)

Q: You think that...

A: (interrupting): I will, I just want to stay in the country itself.

Q: You think the RPF will come here?

A: By doing what? ... by fighting?

Q: Yes.

A: (making a doubtful pout) ... We, we can't know that. Because what we hear, we only hear it on the radio. But we don't know the activities, we don't know the programs ... We don't know what can happen here ... There are also government forces that are fighting, fighting with it ... So we can't specify, who will specify? I don't know...

A: But you see yourself... You see these houses that have been destroyed (points with his hand in front of him), yourself there...

Q: Yes...

A: Those were the houses of... ours. So, how can we go back there? Without food, without anything to eat, without clothes, without... all that... Hub?

Q: And before, what did you do for a living?

A: Me?

Q: Yes.

A: I was a builder, I was a mason.

Q: Mason ?

A: Yes, yes...

Q: So you lost your job?

A: Ah, very, very much (shaking his head). I left home with this ... You see with these pants, with this jacket and nothing else. I had clothes, I had everything, I had cows, roosters [?] They ate everything, they disappeared. I came like that (looks at his clothes), without other things...

Q: Did your family come with you?

A: Oh! (raising his head and looking away)... The family is already... it's only me who's left... The others... they slaughtered them.

Q: They were killed?

A: Yes, yes...

Q: From your village, many people were massacred?

A: Where I was, they were all...all attacked... (long silence). I say that because the current government, they have guns that they gave to the villagers to hunt the others, right? You see barriers all over the roads, right?

Q: Who is maintaining the barriers... on the roads?

A: Excuse me?

Q: Who guards the barriers?

A: (speaking low) It's the Hutu supported by this government, the burgomasters, the councilors, all the ... (silence. Man chews a blade of grass, staring blankly). (Silence)

A: But even these military people (looks away), they don't like us talking to you (looks sideways) ... They don't like us talking to you (widening his eyes)... Because they know we tell their secrets... Still, I was saying that they protect us... So behind the protection there were people who came to steal from people here... To go and kill them... And when they found something they didn't have, they took it away... All these people, they are people who are not students, who didn't even have a profession... The one who is intellectual is dead... You see that most of them are women, children... No others...

Q: Do you have food here?

A: They give us corn, flour and corn...

Q: Yeab?

A: Beans...

Q: Who gives you food?

A: The Red Cross

Q: The Red Cross?

A: Yes, yes! (silence. Man looks more intensely at camera).

Q: What are they building there, is it...?

A: It's the hospital for bacillary dysentery

Q: It's a hospital?

A: Yes, yes ... Here bacillary dysentery is serious. It's also dangerous, right. Lots of men die.

(...)

Q: When were they here, the aggressors? (voice-over that sounds very much like that of Lieutenant-Colonel Duval) (...)

A: Thursday!

Q: Thursday... And do you know where they went, do you know where the attackers went?

A: The aggressors went back home... (he points with his hand in front of him)

(...)

A: Those who died, are several times more than these. (he points to the whole camp of refugees in front of him)

Q: And where did they stop then ... on the, on top of the hills?

A: No, here in the thickets... or below in the swamps... even in the hills... everywhere, everywhere, everywhere...

Q: And they were armed with what? What weapons?

A: Ah, honestly machetes, spears, ... clubs

Q: Clubs?

A: Yes... Spears, grenades, guns...

Q: And you were ready to defend yourselves?

A: (shrugging his shoulders and opening his hands) With ... with what??? We have nothing! We are like that (he shows his clothes), with nothing else, what? ... There is no way to defend yourself... You can defend yourself as much as you have something to...."

Cut of the filming. End of the filmed meeting.

This long interview, which lasts nearly ten minutes, provides important information and confirmation of the genocidal massacres and the situation in the Nyarushishi camp, in addition to that of the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur. First, the confirmation that the massacres were not directly linked to military confrontations, but were indeed

carried out by the Hutu population - and not only by militiamen, as many French soldiers still think - against the Tutsi population. Secondly, the absence of a link between the RPF and this local Tutsi population, which obviously has no connection or proximity to an armed and political force that they do not know - especially in the southwest of the country. Finally, and without ambiguity, the involvement of local and regional authorities in the organization of the genocidal massacres. This responsibility appears clearly in the explanations of this refugee, whereas it was veiled in the entire testimony of the nuns of St. Mary.

The man interviewed also testifies to the insecurity that still reigns in the Nyarushishi camp. Guarded by a detachment of the Rwandan national police, incursions by militiamen seemed frequent before the arrival of the French military. Following this meeting, several refugees guide the ECPA team to a mass grave where the operator films dozens of human bones emerging from the ground. The refugee also reveals an initial health alert about the dysentery epidemic that is already significant in the camp.

5.3.4.3 CAPTURING THE SILENCES OF TURQUOISE COMMAND: A CONVERSATION BETWEEN COLONEL ROSIER AND STAFF SERGEANT M.

The ECPA team returned to Kibuye on the morning of 28 June. In front of the prefecture, the Turquoise forces have set up a makeshift heliport to evacuate the nuns of Sainte-Marie whom they met two days earlier. They were taken from their convent in military and civilian cars in small successive groups, and were loaded onto Puma helicopters and evacuated to Goma. It was the CPA 10 detachment of Lieutenant-Colonel Duval who took charge of this operation, filmed by ECPA, with great efficiency.

Between two helicopter rotations, the operator chief warrant officer frames two French soldiers talking, in the middle of a group of seven French soldiers. The one on the left is Staff Sergeant (M), belonging to the Air Commandos detachment under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Duval ("Diego"), very active in the evacuation of the nuns. His contact was Colonel Jacques Rosier (JR), head of the COS. The latter personally supervised the evacuation operations of the Sisters of St. Mary, whom he had met two days earlier.³⁴⁷

Their words are difficult to understand, sometimes disjointed, because of the interfering noise of the vehicles carrying out the evacuation. The two men are in downtime, between two evacuations, and are talking about one of the nuns of the Congregation, undoubtedly Sister Ketels, interviewed the previous 26 June by the ECPA team.

JR: *I think she's going to be the last one on board because she's a leader...*

M: *She was...*

JR: *I saw her the other day I came ...she was ... [...]*

M: *But actually it's more of a combination of circumstances...*

JR: *She's terrified, right!*

M: *The first time we saw her,³⁴⁸ well, we felt that they had a more or less normal life ... there was the prefect*

...

JR: *Yeah, yeah ...*

(The camera frames Colonel Rosier from the front, and Staff Sergeant M. from the back)

M: *And then she cornered me, I was outside, she cornered me in a corner of the garden, and at that moment... she cornered me... (other voices cover their words).*

JR: *She came out, yes ... Silence. He continues: "She's traumatized, it's... it's terrible, isn't it?"*

Colonel Rosier looks away from his subordinate.

He repeats, eyes in the vague: *It's terrible...*

After a silence, the COS chief resumes the conversation, turns to his interlocutor; the first sergeant looks carefully at his superior.

JR: *But she told me when, because she's older, in '59, it was terrible... but there's never been anything like it now!* (he supports his words by extending his index finger towards his interlocutor. Silence)

At this point, Staff Sergeant M. speaks again, and reopens the conversation by expanding it. To illustrate his superior's feelings about the situation, he tells him what he saw the day before with his detachment, in a reconnaissance in Bisesero hill. The head of the COS looks at him and listens attentively at first.³⁴⁹

M: *You had to see yesterday. Yesterday we were in I don't know which town, there were battles all day (Jacques Rosier looks at him constantly and says "mmm" regularly) in the hills... houses that were burning everywhere. Guys walking around with pieces of flesh torn off... well... it's...*³⁵⁰

JR: *Hh huh ... (the colonel turns and looks away, probably*

to watch for new vehicles).

M: *Well, pfff...* (the soldier makes a vast gesture with his hands to signify a cataclysm).

At this moment, Colonel Rosier turns, no longer facing the camera. The EPCA operator moves to have him face again. Staff Sergeant M. speaks again. His supervisor stares at him.

M: *Yeab, and then the problem is that ... I don't know how they heal themselves, they're full of festering sores all over the place, I mean...*

(Silence.)

JR: *Yeab...*

After a silence, the staff sergeant continues:

M: *... We avoided a lynching because... The guide who accompanied us obviously was... he was one of the guys who, how shall I put it, who was guiding the militias in the days before...*³⁵¹

JR: *Oh yes...*

M: *So when we came across the band of Tutsi who were fleeing into the hills, so when they recognized him, phen, bad...*

JR: *Oh yes! Ah! well?*

M: *... We had to raise the volume and the tone...*

JR: *Oh yeab!*

M: *.... Because I thought they were going to stone him, right...*

Colonel Rosier nods his head and then lowers his gaze to the ground. The first sergeant is still looking very carefully at his superior who, pensive, is no longer looking at him. End of the filming and of the filmed conversation.³⁵²

When analyzed in its entirety, the sequence initially shows the COS commander of Operation Turquoise fully aware of the dramatic situation in which the Tutsi of Rwanda find themselves. But then, he seems to pay less attention to the words of Staff Sergeant M. who nevertheless insists.

5.3.4.4 PUBLICIZING THE HUMANITARIAN AND POLITICAL DIMENSION OF TURQUOISE: FRANÇOIS LÉOTARD'S VISIT

On 29 June, 1994, the ECPA team filmed a large part of the visit of François Léotard and Lucette Michaux-Chevry to the Turquoise forces. The two ministers were accompanied by dozens of journalists, cameramen, and French and international photographers who also covered the event: it seemed to represent the first high point of the “media maneuver,” i.e., the strong dimension of

communication and media coverage of Operation Turquoise.

In the morning, the operator chief warrant officer filmed the arrival of the Minister of Defense at the airport in Goma, the main rear base of the French military operation. After being welcomed by General Lafourcade and three senior Zairian dignitaries, François Léotard visited a military surgical unit (ACM) and attended a short briefing by the operation commander under a tent. Amidst the noise of military transport planes, the latter told the Minister that one of his objectives at the time was to “pass the message to the FAR and their subordinates, and especially to the militias, that these people should keep quiet and not compromise the mission.”³⁵³

The ECPA team then covered the boarding and transportation of the Minister of Defense in a military transport plane (CASA) that took him to Bukavu airport, the second rear base of the operation; on board, he was accompanied by Generals Lafourcade and Mercier,³⁵⁴ and some French journalists. On arrival in Bukavu, the Minister was greeted by Zairian soldiers and by Colonel Jacques Rosier, head of the COS, who gave him a military briefing in front of a map of Rwanda.³⁵⁵

In a third stage, the ECPA team - which had been airlifted in shortly before - covered François Léotard’s visit to the huge Nyarushishi camp. Located near Cyangugu and housing nearly ten thousand refugees, most of them Tutsi, it was a priority “communication target” of Operation Turquoise. The Minister of Defense and his numerous companions were welcomed by Colonel Didier Tauzin, commander of one of the three COS groups, and in this case responsible for the camp’s security. The minister, wearing a shirt and sneakers, looking serious, followed by his small crew, was quickly led by Colonel Tauzin towards the crowd of refugees waiting for them below: in the background, hundreds of green and blue tents lined up on the slopes of a vast hill. From the outset, François Léotard pays close attention to the dozens of Tutsi refugees who crowd around him. He first questioned at length the primary Rwandan official in charge of the camp, a cleric, about the organization and the food situation in the camp. The man tells him that there is a “lack of many things,” and asks for rice, milk for the children, clothes, shoes... He also reveals that because

of the lack of wood for heating, the refugees are forced to leave the camp to go and look for it in the surrounding woods: "Then the militia catches them... Then they don't return."

The minister then speaks - on his knees - to young children and tries to find out if they have been able to eat today. Next he talks to a young refugee to find out if he feels safe in the camp. The young man hesitates, then answers that he doesn't feel "so safe" because of people "walking around with machetes." But he points out that, since the arrival of the French, "there are no more problems" and that the Rwandan gendarmes are "correct" with them. A young leader in charge of a sector then questioned the minister and told him that the refugees also lacked a lot of medicine because "there is bacillary dysentery, cases of meningitis... and malaria." When asked by François Léotard, he explained that he had been "chased" out of Kibungo, a town in southeastern Rwanda more than 200 kilometers from Nyarushishi. He told him that he had to flee because his house had been "broken" and that "the people in the vicinity had been killed."³⁵⁶

It was at this point in the visit, amidst the refugees and journalists surrounding him, that the Minister of Defense made his first statement in response to a question posed by a French reporter:

Q: A word? Your first impressions after a few hours in Rwanda?

FL: Listen, I came to meet the French forces and to look with them at the mission they are accomplishing with great rigor, and of course with great difficulty, as you can also see. And then to meet as many people as possible in Rwanda, to listen to their needs, which is what I am doing here today in this camp; to find out how we can respond to these needs and gradually deploy the French system so that it is more effective. To this end, I met with General Lafourcade, the head of the French forces. And then we took stock of humanitarian aid, because our essential function is to accompany and protect the populations and to ensure that they can receive the aid they need.

Then, responding to an unfiled question:

We continue to do reconnaissance of course. We conduct it with the means we have and which, as you can see, contrary to what has been said, are relatively limited. And we do this by trying our best to determine where there are needs, and where we can intervene - without coming into contact with people who are currently in a bellicose situation. And we don't want to be in an interposition situation. That is clear. That

*of course limits what we can do, and we do it where we can, and to the best of our ability.*³⁵⁷

The ECPA team then films the Minister of Defense talking to two African journalists. The second, microphone in hand, asks him a first question about the geographical scope of the humanitarian component of the French intervention:

Q: Is your humanitarian action going to stop only here, in Cyangugu?

FL: What we are going to do is to make sure that on the spot, if possible by keeping people on the spot, who are not meant to be exiles. By keeping the people in place, we must first ensure security, and that's what we're doing in military terms. And then we have to provide them with the assistance they need, food, clothing, health care. That's our first objective. If we can do that, it will be the beginning of our success. This has not yet been achieved. I remind you that Resolution 929 was voted barely a week ago. So we still need time, not only for France, but if possible for other Africans to come here to help the Rwandan people. And then we still need time at the level of the international organization. France has set the example, others must now join or follow.

Q: One last question: if you accept the genocide here in Rwanda, which...

FL (interrupting him abruptly): Why do you say that? Why do you want us to accept it? We don't accept anything. We don't accept genocide! Why do you say that?

Q: Because according to you, if a minority attacks a majority, and this minority is weak because of horrors and... numerical quantity. The majority is to blame for the crime?

FL: We never said that! Who said that? We never said that, we never said that! What we want is to have peace. Peace between Rwandans first, first of all Rwandan peace among themselves... Some people, France for example, must not substitute themselves for the Rwandans. Secondly, this is an African problem, the Africans must be able to manage this crisis as they can. And finally, the international community. France is doing what it can in terms of great impartiality so as not to be accused of taking sides. It is trying to protect civilians where it can, unarmed people like yourselves, who are unarmed and who have no means of protecting themselves. This is our uh ... our attitude. I thank you sir!"

François Léotard, visibly upset, turns his head and puts a rather abrupt end to an embarrassing meeting, his interlocutor using extremist Hutu rhetoric. Somewhat removed from the tumult, the ECPA team then filmed an informal discussion between three

French journalists and General Lafourcade.

Q1: *“Are there isolated people that you have picked up right and left?”*

GL: *Uh...*

Q1: *Who made themselves known when you arrived?*

GL: *Uh...*

Q2: *There are people who report themselves?*

GL: *You have to ask the local guys, but they do it regularly if you want, they look to see if there are any safety issues and they bring them back...*

Q1: *Yeah I know, he told us one or two a day basically.*

GL: *We come and pick them up by car. People who are scared and ask to be taken to a protected area.*

Q3: *Do you have a lot of information coming in? Because yesterday we said: I know people who are hidden in such and such a place, only if the French military comes, it will unleash the Hutu families who are there and so uh... it will put them in danger!*

GL: *Our problem is to go see them. To make contact with the people, and then if we really have people who are afraid, we protect them.*

Q3: *So including Hutu families who hid the Tutsi, you would take the Tutsi away and protect the Hutu?*

GL: *We will protect that world. [...]*

Q2: *You have quite a bit of information on the...?*

GL: *It's starting to come in little by little, but careful, we haven't been here long, so it's long...*

Q2: *There are some... the most serious incident for you is what? Nothing happened that...?*

GL: *The most serious incident, no uh... it's the case that... that escapes me because we are not yet in the area, from the day before yesterday when they fought in the mountain over there, in...*

Q2: *On Kibuye*

GL: *That's it!*

Q3: *Were there any deaths?*

GL: *I think there were deaths, yes...*

Q2: *Otherwise there was nothing else in the north of...?*

GL: *In any case, we didn't have the means to go and see, so... (he seems a little embarrassed).”³⁵⁸*

End of the filmed meeting.

This impromptu conversation seems to show that the commander of Operation Turquoise still has a superficial knowledge of the genocidal massacres in the Kibuye sector. And in particular those of Bisesero, which are still occurring at the very moment of this discussion and which are in the background of this entire exchange. Their existence and magnitude

still seem to “escape” General Lafourcade, even though the French military already have information on them.

François Léotard continued his visit with a meeting with five ICRC officials with whom Colonel Tauzin seemed to have difficult relations. Colonel Tauzin then gave him an overview of the situation based on a large map placed on a table, while Generals Lafourcade and Mercier looked on. Didier Tauzin explained the two dimensions of his mission: “deterrence and communication.” For the deterrence aspect, the colonel recommends “asserting our strength and determination...” At this point, General Lafourcade interrupted the development of his analysis, and said in a low voice: “Beware journalists, so uh ... control!” Colonel Tauzin turned around and asked him curtly if there were “any problems.” He immediately resumed his energetic demonstration before the eyes of the minister, somewhat taken aback by the incident.

François Léotard’s filmed visit to Nyarushishi ended with a meal with Colonel Tauzin and some of his men; it was held on a large outdoor table, in the midst of journalists and cameras.³⁵⁹

The Minister of Defense concluded his visit to the Turquoise forces in Goma, where he gave a press conference in the company of Lucette Michaux-Chevry and General Lafourcade. More than an assessment of his day, it is the provisional assessment of Operation Turquoise that he wishes to draw up in front of the journalists and the ECPA camera:

It’s been just over a week since Security Council Resolution 929 was passed, you may recall, last Wednesday at exactly this time. And so, eight days later, we have been able, with many difficulties as you know, to ensure that a very significant potential force is already here, here in Zaire, and is in the process of operating in Rwanda, where situations, people in danger or distress, are reported to us. The results are already satisfactory, and must be continued, but men and women have already been saved by the mere presence of French soldiers. I am not just talking about the operation to evacuate the nuns in Kibuye, but also about the simple French presence, which has certainly made some of the belligerents slow down their action or interrupt it temporarily. But of course this is not enough. We are aware of a number of places

*where a certain number of Rwandans, whatever their ethnicity, are taking refuge today, and we will endeavor in the coming days to continue the operation, first with reinforcements that will continue to bolster the military forces that we have.*³⁶⁰

After Lucette Michaux-Chevry spoke about the “aggravated humanitarian situation” that she had witnessed, a French journalist³⁶¹ - no doubt already informed about the ongoing massacres in Bisesero - questioned the Minister of Defense:

Q: Ms. Minister, Mr. Minister, we understand these difficulties. Nevertheless, if people were massacred a few kilometers from where the French forces are, it would certainly be a political disaster?

FL: Sir, obviously the French soldiers are generous and courageous men and so if they had information of this nature, I can tell you, they would intervene, it's obvious, it's obvious! Uh so... they... It's assistance to persons in danger, of course they would, and I can tell you that we are currently gathering all the necessary information to try to go where the danger is the most pressing. But I insist once again on the disproportion between what appears to be humanitarian needs today, and the dangers faced by thousands of people, and the means available.

This is not an operation with a military vocation, with a military objective, this must be made very clear! The army here is a tool, and a tool to save lives - which is one of the most noble roles of a soldier, by the way - but it is not a warlike role, as I just reminded you, in any way!

The Minister of Defense added more explicitly a few moments later, in response to a question about possible contacts with the RPF: “We are not here to come between the combatants!”³⁶² During the 21-minute press conference filmed by ECPA, the word “Tutsi” was used only once by French officials - and that was in relation to the RPF. The words “Hutu,” “genocide,” “genocidaire” were never used.

5.3.4.5 FILMING IN THE HEART OF DARKNESS OF THE GENOCIDE: THE NIGHT OF BISESERO

In the early afternoon of 30 June, a detachment of the Gillier group discovered dozens of Tutsi survivors who had survived weeks of genocidal hunts and massacres

in the hills above Bisesero. Commander Marin Gillier arrived on the scene half an hour later and, given the extent of the disaster, alerted the head of the COS to which he reported. Colonel Rosier and the Turquoise staff then launched a vast helicopter rescue and medical evacuation operation (EVASAN) for the most seriously wounded to the parachute surgical unit in Goma: the two EMMIR surgeons were quickly overwhelmed by the number and the severity of the injuries.³⁶³ Soldiers from the 1st RPIMa, the Trepel commandos and the GIGN were airlifted in to provide security, first aid and organize the evacuation of the most seriously wounded. The ECPA team arrived with the first helicopters at nightfall and filmed all night long³⁶⁴ in extreme conditions.

The images that follow one another in these rushes are at once confusing, dramatic, and sometimes unbearable. Shot in very difficult technical conditions, at night, without light and without a camera viewfinder,³⁶⁵ they bear witness to mutilating injuries inflicted on adults - but especially on children.

The camera first films the evacuation by helicopter of a man wounded on both hands. Because of the night, the helicopter rotations had to be stopped quickly for reasons of navigation safety, but also for military security, since the French soldiers seemed to fear the presence of RPF members or infiltrators on the hill of Bisesero at all times during their EVASAN operation.³⁶⁶

The ECPA team then lingers on the first survivors grouped in a clearing next to the improvised helipad. They sit on the ground, silent, each with a piece of paper in their hand indicating their type of injury. The ECPA team filmed the COS soldiers - caregivers or not - who identified the wounds more precisely, disinfected them as best they could with Betadine, and applied makeshift dressings and bandages to the wounds, which were most often open and sometimes several days old. Little by little, overwhelmed by the number and severity of the injured, they show exceptional composure in their acts of emergency care.

Chaotic, the images are punctuated by the comments of the French soldiers, confronted with the horror. One after the other, a child with a head injury and a large cut on the back of his skull; a young

man with an arm injury (“so he is suspected of having a fractured left arm”); a young boy with a foot broken by a stone; an 8-10 year old boy with a hand injury (“it’s a bullet wound, normally... oh sh**t, it’s been there for at least two days... he must have a f***g infection”); a little boy with a head wound (“this one, it’s serious the little one ... he’s got a grenade shrapnel, he’s ...”); a 5-year-old girl with an open wound to the head (“the little one in the face ... back of the skull... it’s not pretty...”); a little boy with a 15 cm cut on his cheek; a young boy with a large circular wound on his ankle (“yeah, it’s a through and through bullet. Compress!”); a man with burn marks all over his body (“ah, he’s burned all over!”); a woman with two wounds on her stomach, one of which is still open; a young man with a bandage on his neck (“That’s a bullet!”); a little girl of 3-4 years old with multiple wounds (“Frigging nuts, it’s not possible! She’s not very hearty...”); a man with a thigh pierced by a bullet; a boy of 8-10 years old with a wound on his chest (“It’s already healed... A bullet that went through him, and he’s still breathing! I don’t know how he did it ... his lung must be in a state!”).³⁶⁷

For the first time, Turquoise soldiers were immersed in the reality of the genocide. Two elements seem to have left a strong impression on them. First, the abominable smell of the corpses all around their rescue zone. The second stuns those who look at these images today: the almost total absence of moans, complaints, and tears from these survivors, most of them children, suffering from abominable injuries. Some of them had been hiding for weeks to escape the “hunts” of the Hutu genocidaires, and their habit of absolute silence was undoubtedly one of the essential conditions for their survival in the woods of Bisesero.

As the night progressed, dozens of “unharmed” survivors came out of the woods to seek protection from the French soldiers. At dawn, in the cold due to the altitude, the ECPA operator filmed a crowd of several hundred Tutsi refugees, who gathered around the clearing where the Turquoise soldiers were installed. These survivors appear on the images to be extremely frail, their faces very marked, and most of them are wearing clothes with holes in them, torn

or burned. The French military led by Marin Gillier organized as best they could a large distribution of protein cookies, which led to some jostling among the starving people.³⁶⁸

Later in the morning, the ECPA team decided to leave the health “intervention platform” to follow a detachment of the Trepel commando: a few men set off on foot to reconnoitre the very dense woods that cover the heights of the Bisesero hill. With a Betacam camera weighing several kilos on his shoulder, the chief warrant officer filmed the patrol climbing the steep hill through the trees. The commando quickly discovers a decomposing corpse, then two others a few meters further on: a man and a woman, one next to the other, victims of the Hutu extremists’ “hunts.” As they advance, the French soldiers pass five more corpses, in the picture without comment, and without stopping. The ECPA operator films these often mutilated and decomposing bodies in close-up.

Suddenly, the commando team discovers a Tutsi survivor in the middle of the forest. The patrol stops and the operator takes a fixed shot of this man in his thirties, very thin, with a bloodshot left eye. He is wearing a blue jacket that is much too big for him, with holes in it and burn marks on his back. He seems totally traumatized, physically and psychologically. Framed alone in front of a forest landscape, trembling, with his whole body, he is interrogated with little care by the members of the commando whom he faces at a distance, and who remain out of frame. Obviously, the shocked man understands and speaks French poorly.

Q: You ran away? Did you manage to run away?

A: Yes (he nods).

Q: to hide yourself? (the haggard man seems to have a lot of trouble understanding) No, but you managed to, to...?

A: Yes, it's to run. You have to run, because there's a group here (points to a direction in front of him with a branch) that... that attacked us. There's the other... (points to the other side with his branch) that attacked us. When the first group chases us, we run before getting here... and we go towards the bush (points to a direction in front of him)

Q: Um... And do you know who that is?

A: Do you?

Q: Do you know who it is, who did this? ... (the man doesn't seem to understand) Who is the person responsible?

A: It's the burgomaster of the commune. There was a day that ... (he shakes his index finger), even the prefect who came.³⁶⁹

Q: One day the prefect came?

A: Yes, yes! (says with great conviction).

Q: He was with the attackers?

A: Yes, yes, with the soldiers, with the guns, with the clubs and the boes...

Q: And you're sure it was them, you recognized them well?

A: Yes, yes! (he supports with a nod of the head, extremely affirmative).

Q: What is the burgomaster like?

A: The burgomaster is from the commune of Gisovu (he turns around and points).

Q2: Ah, from Gisovu.

Q: What does he look like, how is he physically, what does he look like?

A: The burgomaster, he is from the commune of Gisovu, and... and from the commune here (he points to his left)

Q2: From Gishyita.

Q: What does the burgomaster of Gishyita look like... what is his name?

A: What is his name? (the survivor does not understand the meaning of the expression "what does he look like")

Q: How is he physically: is he tall, is he short, is he fat ...?

A: With a big gun... [cut]

Q: Have you seen him, the ... have you ever seen the burgomaster?

A: I knew him

Q: And what does he look like?

A: He's ... black

Q: Yes!!! ... That's news! ... Yes"

The members of the commando team laugh and immediately set off again, leaving the survivor behind.³⁷⁰

In this last sequence, the COS soldiers show very little psychology or even empathy towards a man who is visibly in shock, who has just experienced days of "manhunt." Undoubtedly obsessed with the search for RPF "rebels," these elite soldiers seem to give little credence to his testimony, particularly on the responsibility of the Hutu authorities in the genocidal massacres whose effects on the civilian population they have just witnessed firsthand. This indifference to suffering may also be the result of the need to protect themselves personally while these soldiers are in constant contact with death.

5.3.5 A major evacuation operation and its limits: Butare in early July

The actors' understanding of the specific issues at Bisesero must take into account a chain of information that is clearly not very efficient and that does not always allow the actors on the ground to make fully informed choices. At the same time, these choices cannot be dissociated from the orders given to the French armed forces and, in particular, to the special operations detachment. Thus, at the Armed Forces headquarters, the evacuations that are favored are those of religious communities that are easily identifiable and with whom contact appears easier. The latter are also important sources of information from which French intelligence officers analyze the terrain.

In the Kibuye sector, on 19 June, only the religious communities were identified. In his mission order No. 1, dated 25 June, General Lafourcade, who arrived in the theater of operations, emphasized the geography of threats to the population.³⁷¹ He then designated several major objectives for the troops already engaged in Rwanda, i.e. those of the COS. He pointed out the Nyungwe forest, the Cyangugu region and especially the Butare region. The importance of evacuating the religious communities was mentioned by General Germanos in his press briefing of 27 June.³⁷² Thus, for Colonel Rosier, it seems that the progression towards the interior of the country along a Cyangugu-Gikongoro-Butare axis may be seen as meeting all the objectives assigned to it by all levels of command from Paris to Goma. It is important to note the chronological proximity between the delays, caused by multiple reasons, in reacting to information concerning the Bisesero massacres and the proximity of the main airborne action of Operation Turquoise, which was the transportation of COS units to Butare, mobilizing many of the resources of Colonel Rosier's detachment.

5.3.5.1 BUTARE, A TOWN THAT HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED FOR A LONG TIME

Since mid-June, the town had been designated by French documents as a population concentration site to be protected because of

the size of the religious communities, but also because of the number of mainly Hutu refugees.³⁷³ At the same time, Butare, because of its strategic position, close to Kigali and controlling access to the south of the country and to the Burundian border, drew the attention of the French staff in charge of planning Turquoise.³⁷⁴ As early as 29 June, in Paris, the town of Butare was seen as the key to the next tensions and therefore as the area where it should be possible to intervene: “Propose a military arrangement with a view to prohibiting any armed confrontation south of the Cyangugu and Butare line.”³⁷⁵

There were also requests made to the Turquoise command to plan quickly: a letter from the students of Butare reached the PCIAT on 29 June. They asked for French assistance: “the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which kills innocent civilians every day, threatens to attack the National University of Rwanda one day to exterminate the students, for this reason the students housed within this institution are impatiently awaiting your troops to protect them.”³⁷⁶ Their analysis of the situation, however, does not include the Tutsi and points to the RPF as the only cause of danger. Without it being possible to demonstrate a causal link, on the same day, in Paris, a reflection was undertaken in order to plan a reinforcement of the Gikongoro-Butare axis to “avoid inter-ethnic massacres.”³⁷⁷

During the operation, a report by Colonel Tauzin mentions a pressing desire expressed by clerics on the basis of information obtained in his area of operation.³⁷⁸

But going to Butare also responded to more specific requests. At the Élysée, the matter was followed closely - this attention at the highest level was reflected in the personal congratulations that Admiral Lanxade addressed to the personnel of the special forces. Thus, already on 24 June, Louis Joinet, advisor at the Élysée, was alerted by a Benedictine superior to the situation at the monastery of Sovu in Butare.³⁷⁹ The written consequence of the entreaty was a memo addressed by Louis Joinet to the private staff of the President of the Republic on 6 July.³⁸⁰ Similarly, on 28 June, Monsignor Tauran, Secretary for Relations with the States in the Secretariat of State of the Holy See, contacted the French ambassador to the Holy See to draw his attention to the fate of the nuns in Butare, recommending that they be evacuated

to Goma.³⁸¹ At the same time, on 4 July, the PCIAT's humanitarian unit received a request for information concerning the nuns.³⁸² This request led to a handwritten reply from the Det COS to the PCIAT: "The 10 Benedictine monks and the 18 Benedictine nuns are sheltered at the bishopric of Bukavu (Zaire). Ten nuns from Sovu remain in Murambi (Gikongoro) with Father Plissart."³⁸³

On the ground, the concern for religious communities was also central. During the operation, a report by Colonel Tauzin indicated a pressing desire expressed by clerics from information obtained in his zone of operation.³⁸⁴

5.3.5.2 BUTARE, A MEETING PLACE FOR FRENCH AND MILITIA FORCES OR AN ACTION IN CONTACT WITH THE BELLIGERENTS

On the evening of 30 June, the staff of the Turquoise force reported in these terms to Paris the risk of tension with the FAR in Butare.³⁸⁵

*The evacuation operation is under way. The RPF is present on the Gikongoro Butare axis. There was no incident on the COS route [...] There is a problem with the FAR on the spot who have resumed fighting. At the pressing request of the RPF, we are considering stopping them to avoid a deterioration of the situation.*³⁸⁶

The French know the details of the front line and the situation of the FAR command sector by sector, including the fighting that is going on in Butare. Present in Butare, the French special forces officers witness the arrival of militiamen in large numbers, accompanied by the arrival of Hutu extremists:

*Last night, a group of militiamen arrived in town, already seen at the Ibis hotel in Butare, where they were guarding the head of the militiamen at the national level (Kajuga). equipped with FAR fatigues, armed with KVs, they noisily show off with prostitutes. They set up shop at the Dallas Hotel. This morning, they threatened about twenty Tutsi at the hotel, which required our intervention.*³⁸⁷

The French seem to have initially envisaged tough fighting for them in Butare because of the presence of the RPF. This anticipation had, for example, led to the reinforcement of air support for the troops engaged on the ground from 2 July. The Air Detachment of the Turquoise force was thus ordered to prepare "cover for the withdrawal route from Butare to Gikongoro," while emphasizing the instruction: "orders to penetrate Rwanda will be given by jackal."³⁸⁸

On 3 July, the RPF is at the gates of the city. This situation was concomitant with a rise in the strength of ground support resources.³⁸⁹

The operation in Butare was also the occasion of a clash with RPF forces that increased the tension between the Front and the Turquoise force. Thus, the special forces units that ventured north of Butare to identify religious communities found themselves facing the RPF. Between 3 and 5 July, the tension within the French special forces units in general and the 1st RPIMa in particular seemed to be at its height and was marked by the recall to metropolitan France of Colonel Tauzin, head of the 1st RPIMa.³⁹⁰ However, the desire to de-escalate the situation seemed to be shared. Thus, the French ambassador in Kampala reported on 4 July on the pressure that President Museveni seemed to be exerting on General Kagame “who replied that he did not know how the incident had occurred. The commander of the French forces had informed him in advance, via General Dallaire, of the planned evacuation operation, and Kagame had given orders that the RPF should not interfere.”³⁹¹

From the beginning of July, the French were in fact considering the relevance of a zone where the fighting would cease. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs referred the matter to the Secretary General of the United Nations.³⁹² The French advance on Butare and its subsequent retreat marked a turning point in the positioning of Turquoise in Rwanda. Ten days or so of contact with the Rwandan government authorities changed the way the French viewed the Rwandan interim government, especially since the military weakness of the FAR created a problematic situation, as the French forces very quickly found themselves in direct contact with the RPF. All of these elements led to a French evolution, with the creation of the SHZ as the pivotal point.

The operation in Butare brought French forces into direct contact with RPF forces and led them to find themselves on the front line in the presence of FAR combatants and militiamen.³⁹³ At the same time, they made the decision to withdraw from the SHZ. At the same time, they made the definitive observation that the FAR’s capabilities had collapsed.³⁹⁴ This proximity was considered a major source of ambiguity and therefore of embarrassment, which made it necessary to reconstruct the Turquoise force in Rwanda even though it had only been in place for a week. In his end-of-mission report, General

Lafourcade clearly established the sequence of events. He distinguished three phases, two of which occurred before the withdrawal. The first phase was the setting up of the operation, and the conduct of the operation in Rwanda, avoiding any collusion with the interim government and the FAR. In a second phase,

Under pressure from international institutions, the media, and public opinion, the force moved further east into the government zone to extract threatened persons, stop the ongoing massacres, and protect the population. The almost exclusive protection of Tutsi, the intervention against armed militias, and the lack of support for the FAR led to great disillusionment among the government forces and the Hutu population. The force had to deal with the disarmament of the militias in order to avoid hostile reactions.³⁹⁵

This phase was marked by the creation of the SHZ, a safe humanitarian zone.

5.4 THE SHZ: FROM A DIPLOMATIC IDEA TO THE REALITIES ON THE GROUND

5.4.1 *Creating an SHZ: why and with what legitimacy?*

The creation of the SHZ was the French response to the continuing fighting and the advance of the RPF. On 28 June, Jean-Bernard Mérimée, France's permanent representative to the United Nations, asked Kofi Annan, UN Under-Secretary-General in charge of peacekeeping operations, for his "analysis of the RPF's intentions after the probable fall of Kigali." The latter's answer, which was not to prove accurate, was that the Front would probably not go that far for two reasons: firstly, "since France had tacitly indicated that it would not go as far as contact with the RPF, the continuation of the RPF offensive would make the latter responsible, in the eyes of the international community, for a confrontation with French troops"; secondly, and in his opinion, "the RPF did not have sufficient means to hold more territory than it does at present."³⁹⁶

Three days later, on 1 July, as the RPF continued to advance in the Butare region, Ambassador Mérimée was asked to inform the Secretary-General of France's concerns on this subject

and to propose that he issue a statement that would urgently call for a cease-fire. It would also ask “the parties to refrain from any act likely to impede the execution of the decisions of the Security Council concerning the protection of the civilian population in Rwanda.”³⁹⁷ The latter having accepted, a draft declaration was submitted to it at its request and its publication envisaged the following day. As with the vote on Resolution 929, Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s support for the French positions is unquestionable, but the diplomatic path towards acceptance of the SHZ, punctuated by meetings and consultations, was still long.

The next step came the following day, 2 July, 1994. It began with the political decision. Admiral Lanxade wrote an alarmist memo to the French authorities about the RPF advance “on all fronts, in Kigali, towards Kibuye and Butare.” He mentions the exchange of fire that had taken place the day before, and the testimonies collected on “serious abuses [by the RPF], undoubtedly comparable to those observed in the government zone and intended to make the Hutu populations flee en masse towards the west and the south of the country.”³⁹⁸ In his view, the situation requires a choice between the two options he presents, with his preference going to the second, even if, as he points out, it is not up to him to decide. The two options are the following:

Option 1: Retreat in front of the RPF advance, avoiding all contact as we just did when leaving Butare. As soon as the RPF becomes aware of this, it will be encouraged to continue. Our units will then have to gradually abandon the protection of the refugee camps, trying to prevent any massacres before the RPF takes control of the areas. This option has the advantage of avoiding any “military confrontation” with the RPF, but it logically leads to a total withdrawal of our forces in Zaire. From that point on, they will no longer be able to carry out the protection missions that were assigned to them.

Option 2: Have the Security Council define a protected humanitarian zone based on our proposals (map attached). It would be made clear to the RPF that its military units must not enter the zone so that the security of the various populations can be maintained. We are in a position, with the means currently deployed, to control the main access routes to such an area. The choice of this option carries the risk of an armed confrontation with the RPF, if it does not respect the measures decided by the United Nations. However, it is reasonable to think that the display of our determination

*should limit this risk. Politically, the decision to impose a protected zone should undoubtedly be accompanied by a clear indication that the government withdrawn to Gisenyi is no longer the official representative of the country.*³⁹⁹

François Mitterrand chose option 2.⁴⁰⁰ For their part, Édouard Balladur and the two ministers concerned - Alain Juppé and François Léotard - were also in favor of this option, but subject to obtaining a mandate, or at least authorization, from the Security Council.⁴⁰¹ They therefore decided to contact the UN Secretary General again on the same day. At the Élysée, Hubert Védrine and Dominique Pin received “for approval” the fax of the diplomatic telegram of 2 July addressed to the permanent representative to the United Nations. Jean-Bernard Mérimée was asked to contact the UN Secretary General as a matter of urgency to explain that “in view of the advance of RPF forces and the resulting massive population movements,” France was faced with “the following alternative: either to withdraw from Rwandan territory, or to organize a safe humanitarian zone in the southwest of the country, based on Resolutions 925 and 929.”⁴⁰² Mérimée should also ask Boutros-Ghali if he supports the second alternative and if he could confirm it by letter, in response to his own letter, a draft of which is attached to the telegram. This should be finalized after the meeting with Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Alain Juppé’s office anticipates that the exchange of correspondence will be distributed to members of the Security Council.

The draft French letter describes a situation that is on the verge of becoming uncontrollable from a humanitarian point of view in southwestern Rwanda, a future “theater of considerable disorder, with the movement of hundreds of thousands of people fleeing in great despair, and the risk of physical elimination of minorities on the spot.”⁴⁰³ Echoing the concerns expressed by the Secretary General on the day of the vote on Resolution 929, it mentions the risk of aggravating the fragility of neighboring Burundi if the populations seek refuge there. It then emphasized that if a cease-fire, a condition for resuming political dialogue that excludes those responsible for the massacres, cannot be obtained immediately, France has no choice but to leave or to organize a safe humanitarian zone in which “the populations

would be sheltered from the fighting and the dramatic consequences that ensue.” The stated objective is to stabilize the populations on the ground and to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid. The zone must be “sufficiently vast [...] and in one area” and its delimitation, also specified on a map attached to the letter, “should include the districts of Cyangugu, Gikongoro and the southern half of Kibuye, including the Kibuye-Gitarama axis up to and including the N’Gaba pass.”⁴⁰⁴

Ambassador Mérimée’s approach allowed progress to be made. The French letter was distributed to the President of the Security Council and to all its members, with the accompanying message from the Secretary-General specifying, at the request of France, which did not want to enter into the process of voting on a new resolution, that the decision to create a humanitarian protection zone “is taken in accordance with the mandate [...] granted by Resolution 929.”⁴⁰⁵ The French Permanent Representative, who knew the ins and outs of the UN system, then addressed the President of the Council, who did not, however, wish to commit himself to using the words of the Secretary General before consulting his colleagues on the Council.

In order to remove possible reservations, the ambassadors were invited, by means of a long diplomatic telegram written by the Director of African and Malagasy Affairs, to present to the authorities of their country of residence the reasons for the creation of the SHZ, with different arguments being proposed here and there. This diplomatic work does not only concern the member States of the Security Council. In particular, it appears necessary to convince the Belgians, who have promised to send military doctors and nurses, to inform the WEU Council, to avoid offending the OAU and, above all, to obtain its support. The arguments to be deployed with the Secretary General of the Organization, in Addis Ababa, and with the Tunisian authorities who preside over it, are the following: the urgency of resuming political discussions and the assumption of responsibility by African countries, recognized by France, to work towards a solution. The 1 July meeting between the French and Ugandan presidents and the points of agreement that emerged from it should also be highlighted.⁴⁰⁶ Yoweri Museveni is once again seen as a key player for French diplomacy, to convince the OAU, to which the Director of African and Malagasy Affairs is dispatched a few days later,⁴⁰⁷ but also to temper the hostility of the RPF.

On 3 July, 1994, while the Ugandan president and his foreign minister had not yet returned from their visit to the United States and Europe, the French ambassador in Kampala, François Descoueyte, could not help but receive a positive reaction from the secretary general of this ministry regarding the creation of an SHZ and discuss the future of Rwanda, where a political solution with “three components would take shape: the RPF, Hutu from the south, who were not involved in the massacres, and some Hutu from the north who had not supported the extremists.”⁴⁰⁸ He also reports a long conversation with his American and British colleagues from which he gets the impression “that Washington and London are convinced that President Museveni is making every effort to encourage the cease-fire, but that his influence on the RPF has diminished.”⁴⁰⁹ The French authorities were counting on his mediation, however, especially as tension between the Turquoise forces and the RPA soldiers was at its height in the first days of July.⁴¹⁰ Returning to Kampala at the end of the day, Yoweri Museveni, who said he was very happy with his meeting with François Mitterrand, invited Paul Kagame to come and discuss with him the points agreed in Paris. They were presented without reference to the interim government: cease-fire, judgment of the guilty parties, political agreement supported by a regional summit. Upon Kagame’s arrival, Museveni asked him to explain a clash with French forces, with Paul Kagame assuring him that it “took place in spite of his orders,” “perhaps linked to the fact that the [evacuation] operation took place a day later than planned.”⁴¹¹

Reporting the RPF military leader’s words to the French ambassador, who remained skeptical, President Museveni explained that the major had never belonged to the hard-line branch of the RPF and that he hoped to convince him to accept a cease-fire. At the request of his supervisory authorities, François Descoueyte tried to obtain a direct meeting with Paul Kagame. After presenting the French proposal, the aim was to clarify the RPF’s position, to assess its intentions on the ground, and also to question him on how he envisaged Rwanda’s political future.⁴¹² The meeting took place on 4 July in Museveni’s office, in his presence and after an exchange between the two men. The ambassador’s description of the meeting - Kagame affirming his goodwill and giving his satellite phone number, Museveni suggesting the broad outlines of an RPF announcement with a declaration of a cease-

fire, support for the creation of the SHZ, and an appeal to the non-culpable government forces - led him to the following reassuring comment:

*President Museveni, delighted with his meeting in Paris with the President of the Republic, whose words he quoted several times to convince Kagame, finally appears to be resolutely committed to a settlement of the Rwandan crisis. As for the RPF commander-in-chief, courteous and reserved, his openness to us confirms that he is preparing to move from the military to the political approach.*⁴¹³

The diplomatic telegram arrived at the Élysée in the form of a fax, noted by Hubert Védrine: “TTU [very, very urgent]”, copy to Bruno Delaye and General Quesnot. However, the RPF’s discourse was, once again, not uniform. On 5 July its representative in Brussels published an aggressive tract-appeal to France, entitled “To the attention of the French people, to all political, religious, military and civil authorities.” This appeal, which calls for the construction of “a fraternal world,” accuses France of falsifying history by calling the members of the RPF rebels, and of taking “a heavy responsibility before history and before Africa by deciding once again on the lives of people and by placing itself on the side of regimes and forces of evil.”⁴¹⁴ On the other hand, although Paul Kagame declared on the same day that he was “not seeking confrontation with the French forces,” renouncing total conquest and seeking a cease-fire,⁴¹⁵ and although his troops respected the SHZ,⁴¹⁶ they continued their advance on the ground.

For the French authorities, it is also necessary to make the interim government and the FAR understand the nature of the future safe humanitarian zone. Yannick Gérard, who on 2 July had had an initial contact in Goma with Jérôme Bicomumpaka and Ferdinand Nahimana, without being convinced of their sincerity,⁴¹⁷ to ensure the smooth running of Turquoise and to stop the attacks against General Dallaire by the Mille Collines radio station, met the next day with President Sindikubwabo and four other members of the interim authorities. According to the diplomat, the meeting, which lasted an hour and a half, took place in a “rather tense atmosphere.” In reaction to the French expectations - “that instructions be given to the FAR and the militia to refrain in this zone from military activities or threats against the population” - the five Rwandans denounced the proposal as

“harmful” and considered that it would be better to fight the causes of displacement rather than prevent it. They describe the planned zone as a “selection,” whereas in their view it should be extended to the entire territory where Operation Turquoise was implemented and even to certain neighborhoods of Kigali, and not abandon Ruhengeri, Kigali, Gisenyi and Gitarama to their fate. They also protested against the alleged partiality of the international community and of General Dallaire and did not hesitate to ask for arms, expressing once again the wish that France help the FAR in their fight against the RPF. Finally, they protested against the forthcoming arrival of Belgians, recalling the negative perception of the Belgian military in Rwanda.⁴¹⁸ The interim authorities still claimed to speak on behalf of the Rwandan population, but these contacts, like the ones that followed, led Yannick Gérard to be among the first, after the suggestion made on 2 July by Admiral Lanxade, to advocate, on 7 July, “publicly breaking with the authorities in Gisenyi.”⁴¹⁹ For the time being, he feared that their reservations about the creation of the SHZ would be a source of difficulties.

On 5 July Boutros Boutros-Ghali finally made the promised statement:

*The Secretary General endorses the French proposal to create a safe humanitarian zone in western Rwanda. He considers that this proposal is in line with paragraph 4 A of Resolution 925, which specifically provides for the establishment of safe humanitarian zones, as well as with Resolution 929, deciding on the creation of the multinational humanitarian operation in Rwanda, which also refers to it.*⁴²⁰

This openness enabled Ambassador Mérimée to present the role of the SHZ to the Security Council the following day, to emphasize its “neutral and humanitarian” character, and to link its existence once again to the handover to the reinforced UNAMIR.⁴²¹ While the majority of members recognized the conformity of France’s decision with Resolution 929 and accepted its assurances, this was not the case for Nigeria, which was more critical, nor for Russia, which wanted a more restricted space and a more rapid demilitarization of the zone. According to the ambassador, the influence of the RPF representative at the UN, Claude Dusaidi, is exerted in favor of this reserved but not hostile position. However, he met with him at his request and considers him “more moderate and open than in the past.” The RPF is not, or no longer, opposed to the SHZ itself, but fears that

government forces will regroup there to prepare offensives and that the interim government will find refuge there. It expects France to disarm the militiamen and arrest and detain the criminals. Finally, he indicated that the authorities he represented were “in favor of a political agreement on the basis of the Arusha Accords, and therefore in favor of the formation of a transitional government, from which the criminals should be excluded.”⁴²² Some of these points had been discussed during the crisis unit of 3 July at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Admiral Lanxade had stressed the need to be “careful that it does not become a safe haven, a sanctuary, from which the FAR would attack again.” To Dominique de Villepin’s question - Shouldn’t we demilitarize? -he replied, according to Jean-Marc Simon’s handwritten notes: “Don’t talk about it for the moment, danger.” The same man is also said to have said - but there may have been a confusion in the transcription between FAR and UNAMIR -: “It is urgent to stop the massacres and quickly hand the baby over to the FAR.”⁴²³ A few days later, the question of who was responsible for the massacres was raised in a new meeting of the crisis unit by General Germanos, who took a position: “The problem of crimes: we can give information and (?) note the assassins, but not arrest people.”⁴²⁴

The last UN step: on the evening of 6 July, the Security Council authorized its President to acknowledge receipt of the letter from the Secretary-General informing of the creation of the “safe zone” in south-western Rwanda.⁴²⁵ This was tantamount to approval of the SHZ according to the so-called silence or no-objection procedure, as General Quesnot specified in his memo to François Mitterrand of 6 July 1994. The French authorities did not wait to activate the SHZ on the ground, a diplomatic telegram of 5 July referring to the first missions the day before and giving as an example the arrest of ten militiamen who were threatening the lives of Tutsi civilians.⁴²⁶ Described by the diplomats, the mission was as follows:

*[The French forces] have the mission of enforcing in this zone the prohibition of activities that could undermine the security of the population: use of force by any armed element inside the zone, penetration of the zone by armed elements (RPF, FAR, militias of each party), use of the zone by the FAR as a base for military operations. [The] forces will also protect the civilian population against the possible actions of militias.*⁴²⁷

What happened on the ground, despite an initial difficulty, when Belgium decided to postpone the dispatch of its medical detachment “in light of the evolution of the political and military situation on the ground, and more specifically because of the efforts to establish a safe humanitarian zone”? In Belgium, the French ambassador in Brussels noted, a large part of the population thought that the French intervention had “changed its nature from humanitarian to military,”⁴²⁸ inevitably leading to a confrontation with the RPF on the one hand, and an even more negative attitude of the IRG towards the Belgians on the other.

Before assessing the implementation of the SHZ by the Turquoise force, however, it is necessary to observe what, during those seven weeks of July-August 1994, was being debated and decided in Paris about the future of Rwanda and relations between that country and France. Although the Turquoise force had to adapt to the realities on the ground and thus had a margin of autonomy, it was nonetheless made up of military personnel who obeyed the orders of the civilian authorities.

5.4.2 The concerns and decisions of French political authorities in July-August 1994

France had a two-month mandate from the United Nations to stop the massacres and protect the civilian population; it intended to be neutral and impartial between “the Rwandan parties” and hoped for a cease-fire followed by negotiations on the basis of the Arusha Accords. The capture of Kigali by the RPF (4 July) and the continuation of victorious fighting changed the political situation in Rwanda, where a new government was formed on 18 July headed by Faustin Twagiramungu, the former Prime Minister designated in the Arusha Accords, with the participation of moderate Hutu members. While managing the refugee issue, which was of great concern to them, and providing increasingly substantial humanitarian aid, the French authorities had to redefine their relations with the IRG and the FAR on the one hand, and with the RPF on the other. They must also prepare for the withdrawal of Turquoise troops and their replacement by UNAMIR. While they speak with one voice in international forums to mobilize other states in favor of humanitarian aid and a reinforced contribution to UNAMIR, this is not entirely

the case on the question of political alliances and their reversal, at least in the first weeks of July when the RPF imposed its tempo and pursued its political project.

Once again, consultation of the archives shows that there were tensions - or at least differences in sensitivity - between the members of the government concerned and between the government and the President of the Republic on these various issues. It is also noteworthy that the Prime Minister seems to have the upper hand on the Rwandan issue, as evidenced by the recurrence, in the memos of the Chief of Staff to the President of the Republic, of the notation: "The Prime Minister has decided." He was also very present on the international scene. He went to the United Nations on 11 July and made, as Ambassador Mérimée noted, the "first speech by a French head of government before the Security Council."⁴²⁹ Accompanied by numerous journalists, he then toured Africa at the end of July, visiting Dakar, Abidjan, and Libreville, before going to Goma, where he gave a presentation, and to the SHZ, where he visited the military field hospital in Cyangugu, shared a meal with the Legion, and visited a French unit in Gikongoro and a Senegalese unit in Kibuye.⁴³⁰ According to the President's advisors, who scrutinized his remarks and saw in them the expression of national ambitions, he sought to "demonstrate that his government, contrary to the critics (from circles close to Paris City Hall), was not abandoning Africa."⁴³¹

In the summer of 1994, François Mitterrand was tired after his trip to South Africa on 4 and 5 July, exhausted by the heavy treatment imposed by the evolution of his health. In Édouard Balladur's private notebooks, in which he mentions some of the elements of his meetings with the President of the Republic, he wrote on 20 July: "Operation on the 7th vertebra, chemotherapy which is tiring him a lot."⁴³² Perhaps François Mitterrand was also affected by what could be seen as a setback for France's African policy? However, he seemed to accept the victory of the RPF. Thus, in the meeting granted on 14 July to journalists Patrick Poivre d'Arvor and Alain Duhamel, the President of the Republic recognized that the war was being won by a "category of courageous, organized people with a military tradition," while not attributing these qualities to the members of a

movement with a political project, but to “the Tutsi ethnic group.”⁴³³

At the United Nations on 11 July, Édouard Balladur, accompanied by Alain Juppé, delivered a “fourfold message”: the need for a rapid takeover by UNAMIR, the seriousness of the humanitarian situation, “France’s willingness to support everything the international community can do to punish those responsible for the massacres,” and the priority of finding a political settlement in Rwanda.⁴³⁴ The question of the French disengagement and the handover to UNAMIR, as well as that of the arrest and punishment of the perpetrators, will be dealt with in the next chapter of this book. The following pages deal with the relationship between the French authorities and the former Rwandan “parties” and present the background to Operation Turquoise: a human drama in the SHZ and on the borders of Zaire.

5.4.2.1 BREAK WITH THE IRG RETREATED TO GISENYI?

On 6 and 7 July, the Africa advisor, Bruno Delaye, and the chief of staff, General Quesnot, signed two memos to François Mitterrand setting out the points of view of various members of the government and presenting the initiatives already taken by each. With reproachful irony, on 6 July, they mentioned “the race to the RPF” and placed François Léotard in the lead, who was said to have dispatched “to Kigali, to Mr. Kagame and without informing anyone, five high-ranking military and civil servants,”⁴³⁵ a statement that was clarified the next day, when its political stakes were toned down: the Prime Minister had been informed and it was only a matter of setting up “a red hotline” with Paul Kagame, in accordance with the decisions taken during recent contacts with the RPF military leader.⁴³⁶

The second minister in the race was Alain Juppé, who “multiplied his approaches to the RPF and its Hutu allies, whom he approached repentantly.”⁴³⁷ On 3 July, he sent an emissary, Ambassador Jacques Warin, to meet with Jacques Bihozagara, a virulent representative of the RPF, in Brussels, and then asked Jean-Michel Marlaud to make contact with Faustin Twarigamungu, who, as a refugee in Belgium, was also making very hostile statements about France. According to the authors of the memo, Alain Juppé’s position was to leave the humanitarian framework and to become involved immediately in the search for a political settlement, described

as “obviously favorable to the RPF.”⁴³⁸ As a result, he “questions the need to continue contacts with the authorities in Gisenyi”⁴³⁹ and he is opposed to any French ministerial visit to the Turquoise intervention zone, a visit that could be seen as ambiguous. He made this known to Édouard Balladur, who had planned to send the Minister of Health, Philippe Douste-Blazy. On July 6, he also decided to send Jacques Warin, whose flight was scheduled for two days later, to meet with Paul Kagame.⁴⁴⁰

According to Bruno Delaye and General Quesnot, “Matignon and the other ministries are less eager” to get involved in the search for a political solution, and Édouard Balladur felt that “for the time being, we should be content with doing humanitarian work and leave it to the UN, the OAU and the countries of the region to initiate and accompany the negotiations between the parties.”⁴⁴¹ François Mitterrand annotated “okay” in the margin of this sentence ticked off by his Secretary General, Hubert Védrine. Although the Minister for Cooperation, Michel Roussin, is not expressly mentioned in these memos of 6 and 7 July, his position can be deduced from the advice given to him at the same time by his deputy chief of staff: “Do not give the wrong signals in Africa by recognizing and cooperating prematurely with a regime that has been created through the use of arms.”⁴⁴²

However, in accordance with the recommendations of the emissary Yannick Gérard, who was in Rwanda, the interim government that had withdrawn to Gisenyi no longer appeared to be acceptable, a decision that appeared to have been taken at the meeting of the crisis unit on 7 July, for which we have two sources. In his report for the Prime Minister, Philippe Baudillon wrote: “It was confirmed that no official contact should be made with the Hutu authorities who had taken refuge in Gisenyi, and who were increasingly discredited.” Also referring to the meeting with Paul Kagame and the political negotiations underway, he specified that Faustin Twagiramungu set the condition for the formation of the new Rwandan government that members of the MRND should participate, “probably individual rallying, as the party as a whole had not dissociated itself from the massacres.”⁴⁴³ The other source is the verbatim of the deputy director of cabinet of the Minister of Cooperation, Jean-Marc Simon, who notes: “Gisenyi authorities, we don’t need them. A very pragmatic attitude.”⁴⁴⁴

With whom could the French authorities, who wanted a rapid ceasefire and sought a political solution as close as possible to the Arusha Accords and power sharing with the RPF, engage in dialogue? On 7 July, Yannick Gérard received the following reply from the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs: “Given the way the situation is developing and the contacts that have been made, it does not seem necessary to meet with the authorities in Gisenyi. The interlocutor on the government side seems more and more clearly to be the army.”⁴⁴⁵ The emissary should only, and “pragmatically,” have the necessary contacts with the local authorities to ensure the smooth running of Operation Turquoise. The next day, he responded negatively to the request for a meeting made by the interim President and the IRG’s Minister of Foreign Affairs.⁴⁴⁶ The rupture was well and truly consummated.

In the days that followed, as RPF troops advanced towards Ruhengeri and Gisenyi, the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) were the focus of attention: General Dallaire tried to establish a dialogue between Augustin Bizimungu, Chief of Staff of the FAR, whom he expected to disassociate himself from the authorities in Gisenyi, and Paul Kagame.⁴⁴⁷ In addition, a declaration was circulated by eight general officers, including two brigadier generals (Rusatira and Gatsinzi) who disassociated themselves from the interim government and its propaganda. In Paris, both Admiral Lanxade and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sought to, or at least wondered about, “the possibility of dissociating the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) from the ‘Gisenyi government’ so that the FAR commander could be considered a valid interlocutor by General Kagame.”⁴⁴⁸ In his memo of 11 July, General Quesnot attributed this project only to the Quai d’Orsay, but it was expressed even more firmly by the Chief of Staff at the crisis unit meeting of the day: “The military must be encouraged to dissociate themselves from the ministers [...] the generals of the FAR must be consolidated”; to which General Germanos replied: “The FAR do not want to help.”⁴⁴⁹ This attempt to put the FAR in the forefront does not seem to have been pursued, as they were largely compromised in the massacres and the RPF won the military victory. Despite the temptation expressed by General Germanos on 13 July to avoid a “total debacle.”⁴⁵⁰

5.4.2.2 WHAT TO DO WITH GENOCIDE SUSPECTS?

What should be done with the genocide suspects, whose arrest and trial the RPF is demanding? This question, which was addressed during several crisis unit meetings in the first two weeks of July, and particularly on 13 July, is dealt with in Chapter 6. The answer, which seems to be unanimous within the government and at the Élysée, is that the arrest of the perpetrators of crimes is not part of the mandate entrusted to France by the UN, but that France intends to collaborate with the UN on this point. This is expressed in a cavalier manner by Dominique de Villepin, who used the expression: “We must pass the baby on to others.”⁴⁵¹ The official position, expressed in diplomatic language in a letter sent on 15 July to the President of the UN Security Council, is that the French authorities:

*will not tolerate any political or military activity in the safe zone, whose vocation is strictly humanitarian, [...] will take all measures to ensure that the rules applicable in this zone are respected, [...] are ready to assist in any decision of the Security Council concerning the persons in question [...] are at the disposal of the United Nations to examine with them the decisions in which they might wish France to assist.*⁴⁵²

The RPF also wants the French forces to disarm the FAR and the militias that are present or that have taken refuge in the SHZ.

5.4.2.3 DISARMING THE FAR AND THE MILITIAS?

To what extent did the Turquoise force disarm the militias and FAR present in the SHZ ? The archives consulted do not shed any light on this thorny issue.

At the outset, the French authorities seem to have felt that it was not up to France to take on this delicate mission. As with the arrest of the perpetrators of the massacres, they referred to the limits of the mandate granted by the United Nations, as well as the insufficient number of men on the ground. On 7 July, a memo signed by General Quesnot and Bruno Delaye recounted the position of General Germanos on the question of “disarming the militias and the FAR within the humanitarian zone and arresting those responsible for the massacres”: “Many people are asking us to take charge of this, but it is not part of our mandate and

we do not have the means to do so.”⁴⁵³ In the same vein, the Quai d’Orsay wrote on 9 July that “there are no plans to give our forces the mission of disarming or regrouping the military units located in the humanitarian protection zone [...] Disarmament is not foreseen, given our limited numbers and the mandate given by the Security Council, we cannot take on this mission at this stage.”⁴⁵⁴ Both documents nevertheless specify that all military activity is prohibited in the zone.⁴⁵⁵ Also, “in the event of an attack against civilians, we would obviously oppose those responsible by force and would be led, as we have already done, to disarm them.”⁴⁵⁶ On 10 July, a telegram from Ambassador Gérard confirms this general attitude: “Unless we provoke general reactions against Operation Turquoise, the disarmament of militias cannot be systematized. It is currently practiced on an ad hoc basis in cases where militiamen threaten groups of the population.”⁴⁵⁷

The French position nevertheless seems to be changing rapidly. Was this due to the strong pressure exerted by the international community and the RPF? On 8 July, France’s permanent representative to the UN pointed out “the pressure that is already being exerted on us for Operation Turquoise to proceed with the disarmament of the militias and armed groups.”⁴⁵⁸ In listing the questions that the press might put to the Prime Minister during his visit to New York, Jean-Bernard Mérimée first mentions this problem: “Why does France not proceed with the disarmament of the militias and FAR elements present in the security zone?”⁴⁵⁹ At the same time, the RPF insisted on several occasions to the Security Council and to France on the need to proceed with this disarmament.⁴⁶⁰

In addition, the incompatibility between the secure and demilitarized nature of the zone and the presence of weapons within it may have prompted France to take action, particularly with regard to the militias. In a directive sent to the commands of the groups on 14 July, General Lafourcade indicated that the FAR should be “fixed” and the militias disarmed:

In this difficult context, it will be necessary to apply progressively the measures foreseen in the SHZ. The goal is to try to fix the FAR in their current locations and avoid movements and displacement of weapons. In addition, the militias must be neutralized and disarmed.

Obviously, the ongoing fighting makes it difficult to implement these arrangements immediately. But I ask you to begin to get the

message across to the various leaders by making it clear that France now controls the SHZ and ensures its protection. Regarding the militias, the FAR command has apparently decided to integrate the volunteers into its ranks and to disarm the others. This should facilitate our action.

The eventual continuation of FAR movements in the SHZ could serve as a pretext for the RPF to enter the area. It is therefore desirable that the FAR units remain in their current combat locations or in their garrisons, explaining to them that this is the only solution to guarantee the integrity of the SHZ under our protection.⁴⁶¹

It seems, therefore, that as a first step, it was decided to disarm not the FAR but the militias, in order to pacify the safe humanitarian zone. General Lafourcade noted two days later: “The risks of confrontation are, for the moment, contained by the progressive disarmament of the militias.”⁴⁶² On 20 July, Ambassador Gérard confirmed that “the Turquoise officers are continuing to disarm all the perpetrators of various acts of banditry.”⁴⁶³ In September, the documents that take stock of Operation Turquoise return to this difficult task of neutralizing the militias. General Lafourcade explains that “the force had to deal with the disarmament of the militias in order to avoid hostile reactions.”⁴⁶⁴ At the same time, the command of the special forces reported that, “in general, the militias were disarmed or dispersed by simple dissuasion,” the use of force having been necessary only for certain “intractable” individuals.⁴⁶⁵ “The actions carried out in this respect,” the report continues, “were all limited in scope and in line with the cases to be dealt with, namely one or two armed and entrenched individuals who refused to hand over their weapons, which they had recently used to commit misdemeanors.”⁴⁶⁶

While the disarmament of the militias was therefore quickly imposed for security reasons, the disarmament of the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) raises much more politically sensitive questions and seems to have been dealt with in a more complex manner, which is not reflected in certain statements made by the French authorities. Reporting on recent events in a very favorable light for France, the diplomat Jean-Christophe Belliard, attached to the Turquoise diplomatic unit, assures us that “in the SHZ, the presence of Operation Turquoise, which has long been the subject of criticism, is now unanimously accepted. The zone is calm, the French soldiers have put an end to the massacre of Tutsi, who are now protected by us,

[and] have disarmed the FAR and the militiamen, who were looting.”⁴⁶⁷ In a memo containing wording to be used for Operation Turquoise, the Quai d’Orsay says that “the bulk of the FAR and the militias are outside the zone, and the elements that are there agree to be disarmed or, in the case of the militiamen who were engaged in looting, are under the control of our forces.”⁴⁶⁸ In the Security Council, the Deputy Permanent Representative of France responded to the critical remarks of an advisor to the Secretary General: “Concerning the armed elements, I emphasized that they had surrendered their weapons or had been disarmed when they entered the zone.”⁴⁶⁹ Hervé Ladsous nevertheless concedes that “not all the weapons could be confiscated.”⁴⁷⁰

This is amply demonstrated by other sources, which leads one to doubt that a genuine effort to disarm the FAR had been carried out. On 19 July, the DGSE reported that

*The retreat of the Rwandan Armed Forces continues towards Bukavu. The Kalembo military camp located in the SHZ is completely emptied of its occupants. Convoys transporting fuel and weapons for the FAR crossed the Rwandan-Zairian border without incident. The arms recovered by the Zairian Armed Forces at the border crossing appear insignificant.*⁴⁷¹

Three days later, the DGSE announced that “the FAR’s strength in the Goma region is said to exceed 20,000 men. Nearly 10,000 men are soon to cross into Zaire. More than half of them are still in the Safe Humanitarian Zone with their weapons.”⁴⁷² The Turquoise forces therefore do not seem to have methodically tackled the difficult task of forcing soldiers to lay down their arms, an undertaking that is all the more sensitive in this case because France had spent more than three years by the side of this army. The analysis closest to reality is undoubtedly that contained in a diplomatic telegram of 19 July: “Progressively, and whenever possible, the FAR and the militiamen are being disarmed.”⁴⁷³ The day before, Bruno Delaye and General Quesnot announced that “the government forces (FAR) are retreating to Zaire with arms and baggage,” without the Turquoise forces making any visible effort to prevent them from doing so, but without them standing idly by: “Approximately 2,500 of them have been disarmed in our zone.”⁴⁷⁴

The scale of the quantities of arms seized is difficult to quantify, although estimates can be made. Thus, the

detachments, particularly those of the special forces, in their daily accounts to the PCIAT report the weapons they seize.⁴⁷⁵ They mention the number, often the serial numbers, the origin of the weapons and the person they were seized from.⁴⁷⁶ These reports therefore attest to the effectiveness of arms seizures by Turquoise. The seizures then open up a new problem, that of storage, which will be seen as a major concern by the group commanders and those in charge of the sectors of the SHZ, because these stocks represent the danger of potential proliferation. The destruction of these weapons was then carried out by the French operation's provost marshal, who drew up an inventory of the weapons seized, before - as in the case of the Northern Group - having them submerged in Lake Kivu by helicopter; these destructions were then documented by a series of reports drawn up by the provost marshals.⁴⁷⁷

5.4.2.4 DIFFICULT RELATIONS WITH THE RPF

The RPF reluctantly accepted the existence of the SHZ and the policy followed in the zone did not meet its expectations. It expressed its dissatisfaction in various ways: forceful demonstrations, unrealistic demands, and anti-French propaganda. These attacks, like the military situation on the ground, are documented in General Quesnot's memos, which were very frequent in July but not all of which were read by François Mitterrand. Informative, these memos also express, notably in the final comments, a deep hostility towards the RPF, even or especially after the latter's victory. Ritual accusations are repeated, without taking into account the fact that genocide has occurred against the Tutsi.

On 11 July, 1994, General Quesnot was pleased to see that the press was changing its mind about Operation Turquoise and that certain journalists were "beginning to discover the 'hidden face' of the RPF, whose advance was emptying the country and was accompanied by selective massacres."⁴⁷⁸ On 15 July, after a meeting at Matignon, he expressed the concerns of the Prime Minister, who feared the following scenario: a new government, recognized by the international community, would ask France to leave Rwanda, even though its mandate was to stay until 21 August. Édouard Balladur was in favor of respecting the mandate, with a

withdrawal on the date indicated and the departure of the first elements at the end of July, while François Léotard considered that the end of Operation Turquoise should be managed “in agreement with the RPF” and proposed that the operation be withdrawn “as quickly as possible” to Zaire. For his part, General Quesnot, who advocated not recognizing the new government before the completion of the UNAMIR handover process, dramatized the terms of the alternative and emphasized the consequences in terms of France’s international image and the definition of its African policy: withdrawing quickly would trigger an exodus of three million Rwandans and leave “the RPF in control of a State in which three quarters of the population will be exiled and will not rest until they regain power through arms.” He adds:

I am convinced that General Kagame is totally inspired by the methods of President Museveni when he took power in Uganda and that he has no intention of negotiating anything with the current “residual government” or with the military leaders of the FAR.

His intention is to empty Rwanda of any foreign presence, whether French, “UN” or other, in order to establish an undivided minority power [emphasis added] and to proceed without witnesses to a complete redistribution of land [idem] to the benefit, first and foremost, of Tutsi émigrés.⁴⁷⁹

This supposed RPF program is again attributed to Kagame in the memo of 18 July signed with Bruno Delaye,⁴⁸⁰ which also reproaches him with “a complementary but psychologically important objective” - “humiliating” France (the term is underlined) - as well as with the intention of discrediting Operation Turquoise and making the withdrawal of the French force difficult. The memo also mentions deadly mortar fire on Goma and a clash with a French patrol.

After the formation of the new government in Kigali, which was sworn in on 19 July, General Quesnot described the situation as follows: a de facto ceasefire and, on the one hand, a government in exile in Bukavu that was going to organize “Hutu external resistance,” and on the other hand, a “total” military victory for the RPF, which “exercised an undivided political control over the government.”⁴⁸¹ Acknowledging that he was stepping out of his role, he nevertheless concluded his memo of 20 July by writing that, with regard to the new government, “on a personal level, it does not seem politically urgent to rush.”⁴⁸²

This position was not shared by all the French authorities,

in particular by the Prime Minister and, to a lesser extent, at least according to General Quesnot, by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. However, his services received telegrams from Ambassador Yannick Gérard, who had been open to a meeting with the RPF since 1990 and who was not forgiving about the extremism of the genocidal interim government. On 18 July denouncing this extremism that led to the exodus of the populations of the SHZ to Bukavu in Zaire, he added: “As if those responsible for the genocide were now trying to drag the Rwandan populations into a sort of collective suicide.”⁴⁸³ The next day, he advised working with the new government in Kigali to encourage the population to return and called on the international community to recognize it:

*It [is] incumbent upon it to be realistic and not to question indefinitely the representative nature or otherwise of the government in Kigali. If by representative it means that the state of mind of the “interim government” and that of the populations over which it has retained a demonic hold is represented in this government, we risk not making much progress.*⁴⁸⁴

On 19 July, the Prime Minister decided, at a meeting at Matignon, to send the Secretary General of the Quai d’Orsay, Bertrand Dufourcq, and General Germanos to Kigali to explain the conditions for the withdrawal of French troops and to obtain the necessary guarantees for the return of the refugees.⁴⁸⁵ The mission⁴⁸⁶ was only able to meet with Faustin Twagiramungu, who was judged to be “constructive,” and the RPF made new demands: to identify the culprits themselves and to send ministers to the SHZ to address the population, ministers for whom the French military would have to provide security.⁴⁸⁷ The sources consulted are unclear on the follow-up to this request. According to a verbatim report of the 22 July meeting of the crisis unit, Bertrand Dufourcq stated that it was not possible to oppose “joint ministerial missions with the UNHCR and General Dallaire in the SHZ.”⁴⁸⁸

The first visit to the SHZ by members of the new government in Kigali took place on 14 August 1994. The delegation was led by the Minister of the Interior. Close protection was provided by UNAMIR, but general security was taken care of by the Turquoise soldiers. According to the diplomat Jean-Christophe Belliard, who reported

on the visit but did not seem to have attended all of the speeches - using the conditional tense on certain points - the Minister assured that the RPF would not return to the SHZ after the departure of the French, that “there would be no reprisals,” that those responsible for the massacres “would be brought before an international body,” and that a distinction would be made between those who ordered the killings and those who carried them out. The diplomat also noted the different reactions of the notables, who were receptive to the message, and of the population, which “remained suspicious” and “had burst out laughing in the stadium when Mr. Sendashonga had announced that there would be no reprisals.”⁴⁸⁹ The slow improvement in relations with the authorities in Kigali was extended by international contacts. On August 17, the French representative to the United Nations, Jean-Bernard Mérimée, met at his request with RPF representative Claude Dusaidi, who was, to the diplomat’s surprise, accompanied by the new permanent representative of Rwanda, Mr. Manzi. The former had circulated RPF documents criticizing France’s action in the SHZ, while the latter adopted a more positive attitude, hoping for Franco-Rwandan cooperation, particularly with regard to genocide suspects. He remained suspicious, however, alluding to rumors of the surrender of arms to the FAR and of future French assistance from the Goma logistical base. Mérimée’s account ends with the following comment:

The remarks of my interlocutor sometimes revealed an informal reasoning which is the following: the aid brought by France in the future will only be a fair compensation for the responsibility it bears in the misfortunes of the Rwandan people. I had to stop Ambassador Manzi several times on this slope, by firmly pointing out to him that this would put our future cooperation on a very bad footing. The fact remains that this way of thinking seems to me to be well anchored in the mind of my interlocutor, who is undoubtedly not the only official to think like this.⁴⁹⁰

In fact, between 20 July and mid-August, relations between the French authorities and the new government in Kigali remained tense: the RPF was unhappy to see part of Rwandan territory slip away from it and be placed under virtual foreign administration; the French authorities accused it of slowing down the return of Hutu refugees from the SHZ and Zaire, and of taking reprisals against them. As General Quesnot wrote on 13 August, the attitude of the RPF “remains worrying: reinforcement of its military presence on the edge of the SHZ, ambiguous declarations,

selective behavior with regard to limited candidates for return.”⁴⁹¹ The final comment of the memo is again very negative for General Kagame, described as “cold and calculating,” “sectarian and intransigent,” “disregarding the human factor” and wanting “all the power.” He was also capable of hindering an “honorable” withdrawal of French forces and of accusing France of “having encouraged the Hutu to flee their country.”⁴⁹² Beyond the expression of personal enmity, this memo, like the previous ones, brings to light the backdrop of Operation Turquoise: streams of refugees fleeing the RPF advance and fanaticized by Hutu extremists, a humanitarian drama in the SHZ and in Goma in Zaire, after the capture of Gisenyi. In mid-August, the imminent departure of French troops also raised fears that the refugee populations in the SHZ would flee to Zaire via Bukavu, creating a “Goma bis.”⁴⁹³

5.4.2.5 THE REFUGEE QUESTION AND THE HUMANITARIAN DRAMA

On 7 July, Bruno Delaye and General Quesnot wrote to François Mitterrand that “the humanitarian zone is tending to become the largest refugee camp in the world.”⁴⁹⁴ Three weeks later, they quoted the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, who seemed to forget the horror of the Tutsi genocide, and gave figures that had risen sharply:

*The tragedy being experienced by the millions of Hutu refugees and displaced persons, clustered in North Kivu and southwestern Rwanda, surpasses in horror anything the world has seen since World War II. These exhausted and terrorized populations (1.2 million in Goma, 500,000 in Bukavu, 1.4 million in the Safe Humanitarian Zone) are experiencing hunger, thirst and cholera. Nearly 5,000 people die every day.*⁴⁹⁵

The sources available for the summer of 1994 - meetings of crisis units at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, meetings at Matignon, meetings between the Prime Minister and the President of the Republic - document the increasingly acute issue of “displaced persons” and “refugees.” Distinct before the genocide, the two terms are tending to merge, to designate the Hutu who have left their lands with the advance of the RPF. Public opinion was alerted by the press, radio and television, which broadcast increasingly poignant images.

The French authorities first complained about the NGO’s distrust of the Turquoise force and their lack of involvement in the

SHZ. Alain Juppé received them on 8 July to report on the situation in the SHZ and to encourage them to intervene, and Lucette Michaux-Chevry, Minister Delegate for Humanitarian Action, did the same around 20 July.⁴⁹⁶ The French authorities also tried to mobilize the international community in favor of the refugees: the European Commission, the major Western powers, but also the competent UN agencies, the High Commission for Refugees (HCR) and the World Food Program (WFP). As the memo from the Africa Advisor and the head of EMP, dated 19 July, points out, “international aid and NGOs are beginning to mobilize, but are focused on Goma. The situation in the SHZ is therefore becoming very worrying.”⁴⁹⁷ The memo, which reports on the discussions of the crisis unit, smooths out the content. The verbatim report written by Jean-Marc Simon (Michel Roussin’s office) ends with the more pessimistic words of Alain Juppé: “Great powers cowardice apathy.”

The Turquoise force was thus confronted with great difficulties, the extent of which had probably not been imagined. Military sources allow us to enter the SHZ and observe the operation on the ground.

5.4.3 The implementation of the SHZ by the Turquoise force and its consequences

5.4.3.1 TAKING DISTANCE FROM THE IRG AND THE FAR

From contact with the Rwandan authorities to awareness of the compromises

As early as May, the DGSE and the Quai d’Orsay had pointed to the responsibility of the interim government for the massacres, which had not yet been qualified as genocide.⁴⁹⁸ However, Operation Turquoise was placed under a requirement of neutrality, which led its command to consider, at the beginning, that the organizers of the Tutsi massacres were distinct from government institutions. Called upon not to take sides between the IRG and the RPF, the French forces were asked to trust the local civilian and military authorities, who were perceived as being outside the massacres.⁴⁹⁹ As the operation progressed, between the end of June and mid-July, this search for dialogue became

increasingly problematic for the French soldiers in carrying out the missions entrusted to them.⁵⁰⁰ Thus, as soon as the elements of the Special Operations Command returned from the field, they reported to Goma and then to Paris what appeared to the officers to be, to say the least, a shady game on the part of these political and military authorities, and which made them feel increasingly uncomfortable about carrying out their missions.⁵⁰¹

In early July, French forces began to gather documentation for the UN commission of inquiry into human rights violations.⁵⁰² With the establishment of the SHZ, the presence of both the FAR and the militia was seen more and more clearly as a source of nuisance. On 9 July, this presence was even described as the foreseeable concern of the moment.⁵⁰³ In a memo dated 10 July, French officers pointed out the responsibility of a gendarme, a teacher and the prefect of the Kibuye region, who had been identified to them as the organizers of the massacre at the Home Saint-Jean in Kibuye.⁵⁰⁴ It appears that as time goes by, the French command in the SHZ exploits the border incidents as an argument with the IRG to speed up the departure and disarmament of the FAR; this is what Colonel Sartre did on 16 July following a clash in Rambura in the morning, and which prompted the IRG Minister of Defense to move.⁵⁰⁵

Turquoise health support and relations with the FAR

The health support resources of the Turquoise force were organized around two, then three, mechanisms: the parachute surgical unit (ACP) in Goma, which was deployed with the operation's command post, the rapid intervention military medical facility (EMMIR), which was essentially intended to provide humanitarian support, and finally the Bioforce, which was set up to deal with the risks of epidemics. This system is not immediately operational. Indeed, the ACP was initially deployed to Goma with the first elements and was the first French resource. However, at the beginning of July, the Turquoise commanders repeatedly expressed their concern for better coordination as the EMMIR became operational in Cyangugu near the first camps where the French forces were positioned.⁵⁰⁶ Justifying a refusal of medical evacuation, the command of the Turquoise force emphasizes that: "alpha ACP reserved except for emergency 1 for Turquoise personnel,

bravo: evacuation of Rwandan wounded to be directed to EMMIR Cyangugu.”⁵⁰⁷ However, the head of the surgical unit, in his mission report, emphasizes that FAR soldiers are being cared for until 17 July.⁵⁰⁸

The question of a humanitarian link between the French forces and the FAR persisted long after the end of formal relations between Turquoise and the IRG, when the latter had not only been driven out of the country by the fall of its last remaining units, but also because it was definitively associated with the Tutsi genocide. On 17 July, General Lafourcade raised the question of the relationship with the FAR in Goma in an operational directive, putting the two thousand FAR soldiers among the refugees who were coming to Goma in terrible conditions.⁵⁰⁹ This choice of the General was discussed by Ambassador Yannick Gérard and he mentioned it on 23 July in a personal report to the EMA in Paris.⁵¹⁰ Between General Lafourcade and the French ambassador there was a conflict of analysis. While the latter was trying to obtain a clear shift in French policy to detach it from the IRG, the General’s gesture appeared to be a form of contradiction. The general’s argument to justify his gesture - a sign of a perceptible difficulty - refers to a purely humanitarian question. For him, it is a question of the dying and the starving, whose situation contributes to the very serious health crisis in Goma. The latter situation was a constant concern for General Lafourcade, who mentioned it very regularly, both in the messages he sent to the various groups in the force and in those intended for the headquarters in Paris.⁵¹¹

The gradual realization of the link between the Rwandan administration and the genocide

From the end of June, the clearest doubts were expressed in the French camp as to the compromise of their interlocutors in the field with the genocidal militias.⁵¹² The special forces of Turquoise, in the Gikongoro region, in turn emphasized in their daily reports the links that they suspected were increasingly close between the perpetrators of the genocide and the Rwandan security forces.⁵¹³ Awareness of the persistence of threats also led to increased evacuation activities on the part of the French forces.⁵¹⁴ On 7 July, the

intelligence of the southern grouping, commanded by Colonel Hogard, also documented the importance of the influence of the genocidal militias in the territory where it had to ensure security.⁵¹⁵ The contacts of the French liaison officers in the Kibuye region made it possible to note the more than ambiguous attitude of the administrative authorities in place and linked to the former regime with regard to the Tutsi refugees who survived the genocide.⁵¹⁶ The awareness of the responsibility of the civilian and military leaders of the former regime in the genocide accentuates the difficulty for the Turquoise force to deal with the possibility of the presence of the IRG in the zone for which it must ensure security.⁵¹⁷ In his report to the Armed Forces General Staff on July 14, 1994, the Commander of Operation Turquoise reported the presence of the IRG in the SHZ following the fall of Gisenyi, and the lack of instructions for dealing with this situation.⁵¹⁸ In a message to Paris, which must be read by the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, General Lafourcade clearly explained his deep dismay regarding the objectives of his mission. Indeed, at the time he wrote, there was no doubt in his mind, according to reports from his officers in the field, that the presence of the IRG was “a problem.” Another disturbance came from the field, that of the men facing the horror that affected them deeply. Thus, on the day of the General’s message, a report arrived from Murambi, probably from Commandant Gillier: “The conditions in which we are working are becoming difficult to bear from a human point of view [...] The most horrific testimonies abound.”⁵¹⁹ The marine officer underlined all the limits of the given mission in the face of the reality of the situation in the camps where the French commandos were stationed. He did not limit himself to the question of food and wounds, but also to the vague but more global question of “the most horrific testimonies.” It thus appears, both in the reports that come to Goma from Rwanda and in those that go from Goma to Paris, that the mandate has reached a limit: the security dimension is no longer sufficient, especially since the Rwandan interlocutors have collapsed, both practically and politically.

The RPF demanded the arrest of the leaders linked to President Habyarimana’s regime. On 17 July, 1994, an IRG-Turquoise meeting was held and “the decision was taken to regroup the FAR, to disarm them and to send them to Cyangugu.”⁵²⁰ The implementation of this decision appears to be more complex in detail. Indeed, the lack of an order from Paris to arrest members of the genocidal

government and the absence of a UN mandate giving the French military the power to arrest on foreign territory weigh heavily. Nevertheless, this was a definitive turning point in the French attitude toward the former Rwandan authorities, as reflected in the unequivocal letter General Lafourcade wrote on 18 July to his three territorial officials on the attitude to adopt toward the prosecution of the perpetrators of genocide:

In accordance with the directives of the French government, we must facilitate the work of forming this commission and transmit the information we have; we will do this through the intermediary of the diplomatic unit. I ask you to send me by Monday, 25 July, the information you have been able to gather on the facts that have been observed (existence of mass graves, people threatened, activities of militias or others, actions of local authorities).⁵²¹

In the second half of Operation Turquoise, there was a growing willingness on the part of the government to distance itself from those who might be linked to the former Rwandan regime. These efforts can be seen in the conflicts between administrations that they gave rise to, where the soldiers of Operation Turquoise, at the end of the operational chain in the field, were both witnesses and participants.⁵²²

In search of new interlocutors

French officers in the field were forced to be in contact with local officials in order to avoid what worried the French military: the displacement of the population.⁵²³ This contact with local elites also leads to an ever more precise observation of the traces left by the Tutsi genocide.⁵²⁴ Thus, by getting closer to the field and its realities, the French military is obliged to measure the links between the local cadres and the massacres, and therefore to envisage the search for new interlocutors. This search led the French military to look closely at all the initiatives that would make it possible to do without the IRG, and first of all to no longer show themselves as one of its supporters, because the “rapprochement of FAR units with our system feeds the feeling that we could intervene in support of government forces,” and therefore on the need in the SHZ to disarm FAR and militias.⁵²⁵

The questions, still rather theoretical, that the French military and, to a certain extent, Ambassador Gérard were asking themselves about the possibility of discussing with the Rwandan authorities, became clearer as the days went by. On 7 July, Yannick Gérard expressed

himself very clearly after his exchanges with General Lafourcade, who wondered about the possibility of finding a military interlocutor among the FAR: "It seems urgent to me to break publicly with the authorities in Gisenyi."⁵²⁶ The situation described by Gérard, which he believes is shared by the French military command on the ground, is the impossibility of maintaining links with the IRG because of their involvement in the massacres. This message also signals the end of one possibility for Turquoise, that of securing refugee camps while the various belligerents talk to each other. This did not eliminate the problem posed by the French, who needed Rwandan interlocutors, especially locally, since tension was increasing as a result of an appeal by the IRG against Turquoise.⁵²⁷

Faced with this situation, the question of renewing the interlocutors of the French appears more clearly in the messages during the first two weeks of July. Thus, in this same message, General Lafourcade insisted on the need to detach from the IRG, which he considered to be discredited, interlocutors of a sufficiently high level to obtain a cease-fire;⁵²⁸ on 8 July, he reported to Paris on the difficulties encountered by Ambassador Gérard.⁵²⁹ A handwritten memo from the Directorate of Military Intelligence dated 10 July, no doubt echoing General Lafourcade's message, denied any contact with General Bizimungu, the FAR's Chief of Staff, because of his proximity to the IRG.⁵³⁰ A few days later, an analysis of Colonel Rutayisire clearly identified him as a "Hutu from the south" and "opposed to Colonel Bagosora."⁵³¹ These marks underline the French desire to identify an alternative to the IRG and the military personnel compromised in the Tutsi genocide.

However, French military correspondence in the theater of operations reports that a form of fatigue is being felt with regard to the possibility of obtaining a cease-fire due to the lack of credible interlocutors on the FAR side. This observation also led to the strengthening of the capacity to extract people threatened by the prospect of an RPF assault on the last bastions of the former government. In a message dated 10 July, General Lafourcade expressed his concern in Paris about the cease-fire and the absence of impunity for the perpetrators of "genocide and other abominable crimes against humanity."⁵³² At the same time, he felt that the fighting would only continue if

the former government forces or anyone else rejected the cease-fire offer.⁵³³ However, General Lafourcade did not seem to have high hopes for a cease-fire, which led him to anticipate an increase in extraction requests.⁵³⁴ The French maintained contacts with the FAR, with a view to a confrontation with the RPF. On 11 July, the *Chimère* detachment of the special operations group reported to Colonel Rosier a contact with General Rusatira of the FAR who was still in the SHZ. The latter warned of possible “RPF infiltrations into the forest to cut off the Gik/Cyan axis and humanitarian aid.”⁵³⁵

It was on 12 July that a report on Colonel Rutayisire, Director of External Intelligence, was drawn up.⁵³⁶ The report describes a world of senior officers, including Gatsinzi and Rusatira, who opposed the most radical during the massacres. On 13 July, 1994, the Special Operations Command proceeded to evacuate FAR dignitaries who had signed the Kigeme declaration.⁵³⁷ This operation is recorded in a report of 18 July. The head of the helicopter detachment of the special operations command reports that on 13 July 1994 at 4 p.m. a manoeuvring helicopter carried out an extraction of an “authority” from Gikongoro to Bukavu.⁵³⁸ On the same day, at 5.30 p.m., generals and senior FAR officers and their families were extracted from Gikongoro in the direction of Bukavu; at 8.30 p.m., another extraction took place.⁵³⁹ On 14 July, at 7.30 p.m., a helicopter in Gikongoro carried out the extraction of an “authority” to an unspecified destination.⁵⁴⁰ In the days that followed, there was no further transport of authorities or FAR soldiers to Zaire from the SHZ.

The French military observed the continued disintegration of all the political authorities linked to the former regime under pressure from the militias and genocidaires, while the last military strongholds collapsed.⁵⁴¹ On 14 July, General Dallaire met with General Lafourcade and put forward the idea of a renewal of interlocutors with the FAR; the analyses of the two generals diverged because General Lafourcade doubted that Rwandan officers, who were considered traitors by some of their troops, had sufficient authority,⁵⁴² but he thought that it was necessary to have local political and

administrative interlocutors. This search for interlocutors among the Rwandan elites is a constant in French policy in Rwanda during and after Turquoise, and is regularly illustrated by the interest of intelligence in identifying political figures. It was this identification process that prompted Colonel Sartre, on 15 July, to send General Lafourcade a copy of a petition that had reached him from a camp, because “this camp is home to a number of political figures who could interest France in an alternative policy.”⁵⁴³ The same day that General Lafourcade wrote to Paris to emphasize the great difficulty of continuing to deal with what remained of the IRG in the SHZ, Colonel Sartre sent him a list of political figures: by presenting them as opponents of the regime, he distinguished them from the IRG, and by describing them as moderates, he distinguished them from the RPF. For him, they could promote an alternative policy, because contact with the IRG on the ground must be avoided at all costs.

5.4.3.2 ENSURING SECURITY IN THE SHZ

The experience of late June and the very early days of July contributed to the creation of a zone under increasingly direct control of the French forces. This zone, which is not yet defined as the safe humanitarian zone, is the product of the military collapse of the last FAR units in the face of the RPF and the gradual realization of the difficulty of finding support among the remaining elites of the former power. Since the Butare operation, the Turquoise force has been in contact on the front line between the FAR and the Rwandans, as General Lafourcade pointed out in Paris. This situation is problematic because it undermines all the talk about the neutrality of a force that would ensure the security of refugee camps far from a front line that it would not be concerned with.⁵⁴⁴ The advance of the RPF was seen as bringing with it the possibility of an exodus.⁵⁴⁵ Thus, in a memo dated July 2, Admiral Lanxade presented two options: the withdrawal of the French force, which could not cohabit with the RPF forces on Rwandan territory, or the implementation of a humanitarian zone, which could only exist because of the UN.⁵⁴⁶

The first few days of July therefore led to the development of a

project for a zone whose military neutrality had to be ensured as a priority. As early as 1 July the Operations Centre began to think about “the possibility of a hardening of the situation in which armed elements of any kind would threaten the population.”⁵⁴⁷ The identification of the cause of this hardening of the situation varies according to the documents: while the same memo states that the Turquoise force must organize itself “with a view to marking our presence and detecting in time any suspicious movement of armed gangs such as the FAR,”⁵⁴⁸ the following day, a second memo sees the threat as still resulting from armed gangs, but which are said to be infiltrating from outside:

*Work requested: in the Kibuye Nyarushishi Butare triangle, propose a military mechanism to prevent and prohibit any infiltration of armed gangs. The means deployed should be able to deal with a massive influx of refugees to the west.*⁵⁴⁹

The threat that prompted the reorganization of the Turquoise force was therefore never due to the RPF, but always to “armed gangs,” a term that became the one by which militias were most often referred to. However, the threats are said to come from outside the zone and to infiltrate, using a tactic most often attributed to RPF troops.

The collapse of the FAR is causing immense panic among Rwandan refugees in the west of the country, for whom the RPF advance is perceived as a vital threat. This perception was largely fueled by propaganda disseminated by the last elements of the local authorities still loyal to the former regime, which further increased panic and tension. This situation confronted the French forces with the need to deal with these flows of people in a humanitarian manner and to avoid destabilizing the neighboring region of Kivu, in Zaire. This observation by the French command modified its perception of the mission and explains why we find, in the speeches that are made, the idea of a shift towards a greater humanitarian dimension, as for example on the evening of 6 July:

Since yesterday the situation has not changed in substance. The RPF has stopped, and the announcement made on 5 July of a shift to a more political and diplomatic phase seems to be reflected in an attenuation of military actions.

The action to secure our groups is bearing fruit. The areas near the

French settlements are becoming magnets for refugees of all ethnicities. The safety measures for people are continuing.

The humanitarian dimension of the operation is becoming clearer every day. The flow of people fleeing the combat zone remains elevated (6,000 people were counted in two hours on the Mwaka bridge 15 km west of Gitarama). It is now time to fix these flows. The Turquoise force is working toward this while waiting for the NGOs to really get involved.⁵⁵⁰

The border of the SHZ with the rest of Rwandan territory, and with RPF forces, was a regular source of tension during the first part of July.

What possibilities for action do French soldiers have in the SHZ ?

The first few days of July were an opportunity for intense work to define the SHZ and, in particular, what was and was not allowed for the belligerents. The neutrality of the Turquoise force, which had been the main military force facing the RPF forces since 4 July, had to be safeguarded, while it was gradually becoming clear that the FAR and the political and administrative apparatus of the former regime had been compromised in the genocide of the Tutsi.

On 4 July, the operations center of the Armed Forces headquarters in Paris sent General Lafourcade a set of very clear communication instructions in which neutrality was to be reaffirmed at a time when Butare, the FAR stronghold in the south, had fallen.⁵⁵¹ The SHZ was defined even more precisely in a memo from the Armed Forces General Staff on 6 July, when it was stated that it would not be possible for the RPF to enter the area without French authorization, and that at the same time it would no longer be possible for the FAR to operate as constituted military units:

Prosecution of perpetrators of massacres: A priori, the indications given seem to us to go in the right direction, insofar as they suggest that elements under the control of UNAMIR facilitate the work of investigation. This is a UNAMIR responsibility in which Turquoise should not be directly involved. However, the definition of the competencies of these UNAMIR elements is a matter to be decided in New York by the Security Council and the Secretary-General.⁵⁵²

This statement by General Rannou, which attempts to define a position that avoids criticism from the two belligerents, is immediately supplemented, on the same day, by another that clears up a point:

Paragraph 5 (prosecution of perpetrators of massacres) of the referenced memo calls for the following clarifications at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

The general framework of this mission was defined by Resolution 935, which calls on “all concerned,” in particular States “to cooperate fully with the commission of experts in the execution of its mandate, in particular by granting it the assistance and access facilities required to carry out the investigations; In general, the Turquoise force must therefore facilitate the implementation of actions related to these prosecutions, in particular those that would be undertaken by UNAMIR.”⁵⁵³

It therefore seems necessary for the Armed Forces to specify that it must intervene, not only to stop the massacres, but also to actively contribute to the investigations and, if necessary, arrests that the UN could carry out. Faced with the genocide of the Tutsi, the position and role of the French force were thus precisely emphasized on 6 July. General Lafourcade attempted to specify in a memo the “set of behaviors that could be the object of intervention by French forces in order to protect the SHZ”⁵⁵⁴; the list was both long and somewhat vague. The next day, 7 July, the RPF launched what quickly appeared to be a test of the French system and the principles of the SHZ. In this context, the Deputy Chief of Operations, General Germanos, gave instructions for a deterrent to be put in place, but refused to give orders that would lead to too rapid an escalation between the two forces.⁵⁵⁵ On 12 July, the EMA reaffirmed the instructions given to General Lafourcade: no force could enter the SHZ in order not to harm the population.⁵⁵⁶ However, the instructions focused above all on the treatment of the “perpetrators of massacres”:

Prosecution of the perpetrators of massacres: Concerning the conduct to be observed with regard to the perpetrators of abuses and massacres, you will adopt the following attitude: Flagrant délit. You are authorized to apprehend the offenders by force but you are not authorized to detain them under your responsibility. They must be handed over to UNAMIR as soon as possible.

Indeed, it is your responsibility to define, in liaison with General Dallaire, the practicalities for the execution of this particular mission.

Prosecution: The prosecution of perpetrators of abuses and massacres is the responsibility of UNAMIR. It can be implemented all the more quickly once the commission of inquiry “into the acts of genocide committed in Rwanda,” whose creation we encouraged by voting for Resolution 935, is in place.

*However, it is up to you to provide all the information you have to the representatives of the UN through our diplomatic representation in Goma.*⁵⁵⁷

The difficulty of applying these instructions is obvious, although they attempt to provide a legal framework and to offer the general options in the face of a reality: the perpetrators of massacres are militiamen or former militiamen already in the SHZ, rather than RPF troops attempting to enter it. The order then attempted to divide the roles between Turquoise and the police forces. The stated objective was not to place the French soldiers in a position where they would become the agents of an authority that was difficult to define on the basis of the mandate received. The refusal of detention by French troops attests to France's refusal to see prisons and camps opened under their custody and authority on foreign territory. On the strength of this mandate, General Lafourcade instructed his group commanders to assert the French presence locally, which was in fact a fairly broad interpretation of the instructions given to him by General Germanos: "France ensures the protection, control and integrity of the SHZ: the FAR must be fixed in place, the militias must be disarmed and any RPF infiltration must be prevented."⁵⁵⁸

In the same message, General Lafourcade, reporting on a meeting, emphasized that General Dallaire seemed satisfied with French policy in the SHZ.⁵⁵⁹

Continued insecurity in the SHZ due to militias, groups and gangs of looters

As the reports from the various groups in the north, south and COS go back to the French command of Operation Turquoise, the persistence of violence specific to the SHZ becomes apparent. This persistence directly questions the mission that was entrusted to the French forces of the SHZ. They could not replace the local authorities, but neither could they allow violence to take place, and they were clearly too few in number to ensure the safety of all populations in all places. In his summary report, Colonel Hogard defines the period from 18 July to 30 July as a security period, distinguishing it from the previous period which, for him, was based on military logic, and from the following

period, until the departure, which was “politico-humanitarian.”⁵⁶⁰

The perpetrators of the violence are numerous and of varied origin. French observers never fail to mention those they attribute to the RPF. Thus, on 19 July 1994, the head of the Chimère detachment reported to Colonel Rosier an incursion by members of the RPF into Rugarama in order to kidnap three people and a few cows.⁵⁶¹ However, RPF violence attracts the attention of French soldiers, but appears to be marginal compared to the scale of the violence caused by the gangs already present in the SHZ.

There are still active FAR in the country, which worries the RPF, as the DRM noted on 19 July.⁵⁶² The author of the memo considers that the RPF is at this point practically in control of the country, but the surrender and arrest of the FAR remains an important issue, especially since they are constantly crossing the border between Rwanda and Zaire.⁵⁶³ According to the information obtained by the French soldiers, the threats persist: “Officers in uniform, members of the former Presidential Guard in civilian clothes, snipers, would try to infiltrate our region to eliminate the signatories of the Kigeme declaration.”⁵⁶⁴ They are said to continue massacring.⁵⁶⁵

The special forces report the extent to which the collapse of the Gisenyi regime is fueling a new radicalization of Hutu extremists already involved in the genocide. One source describes the confusion and disarray on the Ruhengeri side. The source also reports that “Robert Kajuga, the head of the militias at the national level, has been evacuated by HL from Cyangugu to Murumba” to the government. It also reports the presence of a Belgian-Italian “intervener” “who is said to be called Rugio,” in fact Ruggiu, who was urging the massacres on RTLM and who is close to Colonel Bagasora “often seen in the FAR EM.”⁵⁶⁶ It additionally points out the eviction of political figures judged to be too moderate, such as General Rusatira, who had been dismissed and who came to tell the French of his concern, feeling threatened by elements coming from the north, just like General Gasintzi, who was in the camp in the evening under the protection of the men of the COS: “We observed individuals in civilian clothes and in the military, who seemed to be waiting in front of the gendarmerie, unknown until now in Gik. These people had arrived at the ESM when the det came to make the extraction.”⁵⁶⁷

The identification of the perpetrators of the genocide became clearer as contact was made with the population. The special forces at the Murambi camp thus reported on 11 July that “the list of accused is growing (list attached). It will be recompiled.”⁵⁶⁸ The special forces reported more specific cases in this camp later on.⁵⁶⁹ They also attested again of the armed FAR presence.⁵⁷⁰ The disappearance of the IRG and the disarmament movement that it facilitated definitively transformed soldiers and militiamen into deserters and looters. Their violence is considered to be the primary cause of the insecurity in the SHZ. The French reports echoed this, and the flight of Rwandan soldiers from the east to the west led to violence.⁵⁷¹ The French special forces were also called in by the local authorities to help them resolve what appeared to be a major source of public order problems:

*In Kaduba search of six dwellings based on intelligence. Two arrests: Laurent Havugimana and Caliste Halindintwali. These two individuals actively participated in massacres and continued their abuses as guards of roadblocks. Several weapons were recovered.*⁵⁷²

In the days that followed, the situation remained difficult.⁵⁷³ The French forces had to intervene against militiamen on the night of 21 to 22 July and extract forty Tutsi from the Nyarushishi camp.⁵⁷⁴ In a sign of the feeling of impunity, French soldiers were also the target of attacks, as on 22 July in the southern part of the SHZ.⁵⁷⁵ The violence perpetrated by these “looters” was not only that of a disbanded army.⁵⁷⁶ For General Lafourcade, there is no doubt that it is part of a political strategy: the destruction of the means of survival in Rwanda and in the SHZ. This strategy was prolonged by the attack on humanitarian trucks.⁵⁷⁷ It is an extension of the government’s attempts to exile the Rwandan population outside the country while ensuring its control by means of terror.

In addition to these questions of order and the fight against the FAR, the soldiers, such as those of the Trepel commando and Lieutenant-Colonel Gillier, went around the villages of the SHZ to find out about security problems, threats or abuses; they organized local care, medical evacuations, or those of people in danger, intending to assure the populations of their neutrality. To a person

who fears the Inkotanyi, Colonel Gillier replies that a helicopter can arrive quickly if necessary, but reaffirming his neutrality, he adds: “us, we love everybody, Hutu and Tutsi,”⁵⁷⁸ to another, a Hutu refugee, who asked him for help for his Tutsi wife, he offered to take her while reassuring him about the level of protection in the Gikongoro region⁵⁷⁹; further on he explained the role of Turquoise: “We, the military, do not have the means to provide medicine and food. But if we provide security, the humanitarian organizations will immediately come.”⁵⁸⁰ In front of the ECPA camera, a member of the 1st RPIMA describes his day:

This morning, patrol in Gikongoro. We're going back down to Muramba, Rwamiko, Kibebo [...] like yesterday. On the way, I will see the EMMIR [military medical intervention unit] of Rwamiko [...] We will also look at the barriers to see who is accredited. The burgomaster of Rwamiko told me yesterday that he was going to warn people and give them accreditation. So we will see if this has been done, and if it has not been done, I will go and see him again to ask him to do it as the prefect has asked me to do. We will also see if the people, if the refugees are stabilized a little, following our various daily patrols [...] It's going to be a long journey, there are at least 60 to 70 km of tracks [...] We stop in the villages for half an hour or an hour. This always allows people who may have Tutsi in hiding to come and contact us so that we can recover them.⁵⁸¹

However, the French presence was not always well perceived. In Goma, in the middle of a dense crowd of refugees, a fairly well-dressed man stands out, who says, in front of the camera, his anger against the Tutsi supported by Museveni, who have brought chaos to Rwanda and made it “a slaughterhouse.” “The minority cannot govern the majority, except by terror, by killing, by imprisonment. You all know that”⁵⁸² he declared. And he accuses the international community, blaming the UN and the Belgian military for the arms embargo. When asked about the help of France, he retorts: “When you arrived in Rwanda, we danced, we were really happy. But afterwards, gradually, we realized that France’s mission, of course, was humanitarian [...]” but it has become useless because the Rwandans have the means to feed themselves. He especially criticizes the mass of refugees and the support given to the Tutsi: “When there is a Tutsi death, all the televisions in the world, all the international press

mobilize to show it on the screens [...]. But when hundreds of Hutu are murdered, when they are really burned alive in their homes, they say nothing, they say that it is normal.”⁵⁸³

Organizing the French reaction to the violence

The violence was aimed in particular at humanitarian trucks loaded with supplies and required structured reactions. Thus, on 25 July, General Germanos ordered an escort for humanitarian convoys.⁵⁸⁴ The need to fight against the perpetrators of violence that threatened the safety of the population in the SHZ led some French units to conduct operations to neutralize them. In a report dated 23 July, Commander Gillier describes the most spectacular operation known:

*The search for three FAR assassins in the Musange region at the request and in the presence of the burgomaster. The dragonnade conducted by the 13th RDP in conjunction with the GISGN resulted in the siege of a restaurant in Kigoma in 512-505. One soldier escaped through a side exit. The other, Aloys Bazasangwe, tried to do the same from the rear. He did not obey the summons and turned his weapon towards the gendarmes who shot him. His G3 (72652) was fully loaded and armed. The search of another house did not find the third man.*⁵⁸⁵

The vocabulary refers to the ambiguous status of the operation. First, it was a search to identify the assassins, for which the airborne search team of the 13th RDP and the gendarmes of the EPIGN were the best French specialists. The search led to a form of interrogation that Marin Gillier described as a “dragonnade.” This term, in the words of the officer, is above all a preciousness, but it nevertheless expresses the difficulty of situating the operation between military, political and police action.⁵⁸⁶ There is no doubt that this operation marked a turning point in the positioning of French forces in the SHZ vis-à-vis the local population and authorities, insofar as it directly questioned the aims of French action in the field. Moreover, this report was closely monitored by the Paris headquarters, which judged it unfavorably, considering that it led the French mission outside its framework. The COIA and the unit following Rwanda wrote a handwritten comment in the margin about it: “Do not

distribute. Like Lafourcade. We do not have to carry out this kind of operation, especially not at the request of the burgomaster.”⁵⁸⁷

The reaction of General Germanos to the EMA attests to the desire to keep the French military away from local power structures. This concern may be as much a question of the desire to display France’s neutrality in the field as of the mistrust that the local authorities arouse, as if by a pendulum swing. However, it must be said that the scruples displayed in Paris were not shared by General Lafourcade because of the realities he encountered and reported on. Thus, on 23 July, he gave Admiral Lanxade a report on the situation, emphasizing the replacement of local structures by French forces to ensure the essential needs in the zone.⁵⁸⁸ He thus pointed out that the question of security had become central to the whole of the SHZ. As a result, this reality, which seemed to bother Paris, changed the mission of the French forces. The general linked the growing involvement of French forces in the SHZ in the micro-management of security to a major problem on another scale: ensuring security in the SHZ increased the chances of limiting a massive exodus of the population to Zaire. The next day, he insisted on the link between the insecurity of the Rwandans and the desire to get them to leave.⁵⁸⁹ This insistence seemed to have an effect, since on 27 July, in a communication directive, Admiral Lanxade’s office repeated his words.⁵⁹⁰ Thus, it can be seen that in a few days, through a sustained flow of information, General Lafourcade succeeded in getting the CEMA to adopt his position, when the deputy chief of operations had condemned it. In order to convince his hierarchy more clearly, General Lafourcade explained on the same day that “the operations to maintain public security carried out by the units had a dissuasive effect.”⁵⁹¹

However, these police operations in the service of interim local authorities remained delicate. There are few references to them, even though there is evidence of continuing insecurity in the SHZ. For example, a report by the head of the PCIAT intelligence office on 7 August emphasized that the only serious threats to the SHZ were from militias, when he pointed to uncontrolled elements in the SHZ: “reconstitution of armed gangs which would take advantage of the absence of law enforcement and recover hidden

weapons.”⁵⁹² In the same report, the only threats of infiltration into the SHZ that are identified are from the Zairian and Burundian borders.⁵⁹³ This observation of the permanence of armed gangs and threats in the SHZ contrasts somewhat with that made in September by the Special Operations Command, which emphasizes the dissuasive effect of the French forces.⁵⁹⁴ The report mentions the use of subsonic ammunition coupled with a sound reducer (also known as a silencer), which makes it possible to produce a very muffled sound, which is particularly useful in neutralizing sentries. When used in conjunction with night operations, these devices primarily involve commandos who cannot intervene on militiamen who are considered dangerous in full light. In the end, the system described by the COS attests rather, but between the lines, to a certain difficulty in taking action that must put into perspective the loss of influence of the Hutu militias in the SHZ.

Radio stations, a real and symbolic issue in the fight against the continuation of the genocide

The problem posed by Hutu extremist radio stations was quickly taken into account. As early as 23 June, the Canadian government informed the French ambassador in Ottawa that they were seen as a danger because they had made threats against General Dallaire⁵⁹⁵; the diplomats present in Goma and then the military also perceived this. However, the search for a solution took a considerable amount of time, despite the military and intelligence resources that were devoted to it: the margins were narrow, because acting with force exceeded Turquoise’s mandate, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized on 1 July⁵⁹⁶ despite the diplomatic pressure exerted on France to stop the action of the radios.⁵⁹⁷ The Quai d’Orsay in fact left only electronic warfare, i.e. the jamming of broadcasts, as a military option, and the analyses produced by the Ministry weighed heavily on the choices made by the EMA during July.

As early as 2 July, Ambassador Gérard underlined in unequivocal terms the danger created by extremist radio stations. He reports on a meeting with Jérôme Bicomumpaka, Minister of the IRG, and Ferdinand Nahimana, founder of RTLM, and says that he “stressed that the

continuation of such broadcasts would be considered by us to be a serious obstacle to the smooth running of Operation Turquoise.⁵⁹⁸ In Goma, the Turquoise commander was well aware of the role of the radio stations that were launching “calls for massacres of the type that had taken place in April”⁵⁹⁹ and informed the EMA so that it could take action. At the same time, France received a request for assistance from the government of Burundi to put an end to an extremist radio station.⁶⁰⁰ The analysis of the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Admiral Lanxade, is much more cautious, since in the margin of General Lafourcade’s message, he notes that “the destruction is difficult because it seems mobile. We must also see.”⁶⁰¹ However, at his request, an analysis report was prepared on 8 July, the object of which was the neutralization of Radio des Mille Collines.⁶⁰² The crisis unit on Rwanda at the EMA indicated that in addition to jamming, a forceful action by the COS was envisaged, and could be implemented directly with the means present in the theater of operations:

*CCR Proposal: This solution could be interesting in case of emergency, especially as long as we do not have jamming means on the ground. It is proposed to agree with General Lafourcade’s request and to have this hypothesis studied by the COS.*⁶⁰³

The study commissioned by the EMA led to the choice of electronic warfare.⁶⁰⁴ This option, which was more discreet and less violent, had the disadvantage of taking a considerable amount of time, which General Lafourcade’s head of intelligence did not fail to emphasize when he described the future of Radio Rwanda and cautioned that it took more than a week to set up the means of jamming.⁶⁰⁵ But this choice was underlined in August by the same head of the intelligence office, in connection with the Burundian request to destroy the extremist radio station Automorango: “Despite the request of the French embassy in Burundi to neutralize this radio, the decision was taken to maintain surveillance until the arrival of the jamming equipment.”⁶⁰⁶ The issue is still present, since in a memo from the Turquoise intelligence office dated 2 August, it is indicated that the extremist Hutu radio Automorengino was located on 10 July by the research and action commando from the 2nd foreign parachute regiment: “A one-off action was then proposed to the COMFORCE, with the CRAPs from the REP being able to permanently neutralize their generator (which was then out of order), to hand them over to the gendarmerie, or to destroy their transmitter.”⁶⁰⁷

In the absence of jamming, it was possible to listen better, because three *gonios* (emission detectors) were ordered on 6 July and delivered to Goma on 12 July.⁶⁰⁸ In fact, the radio stations took up hostile broadcasts, putting pressure on the population and criticizing France for distancing itself from the IRG.⁶⁰⁹ The risk feared by the French was an acceleration of the exodus of people from the SHZ to Zaire, which would prolong the humanitarian chaos and lead to political destabilization. Due to a lack of resources and authorization, attempts to negotiate were made in vain: “On the 17th, after direct contact with its leaders by our forces in the southern group, it tempered its discourse, no longer broadcasting anything but personal messages and music.”⁶¹⁰ But the influence of the radios persisted, as Colonel Rosier noted in a daily intelligence bulletin: “The population, especially in Gik, obeying Radio Rwanda’s orders to scuttle Operation Turquoise, has, in some places, begun to move westwards.”⁶¹¹ General Lafourcade did not want the effort of monitoring the radios to cease.⁶¹² The analysis was extended directly, at his request, on 20 July, because he saw the radios as the major instrument of the IRG’s influence on the territory of the SHZ.⁶¹³ The effort was all the more necessary because the intelligence remained worrying about the frequency of the RTLM.⁶¹⁴ However, new resources were brought in⁶¹⁵: in addition to the army team that arrived as reinforcements, the resources of the national navy, already present with an Atlantic plane, were mobilized.⁶¹⁶ But, obviously, the means of jamming arrived after the period of radio activity, as General Lafourcade summarized in a situation report on 19 July.⁶¹⁷ At the end of July, military intelligence pointed to what seemed to him to be the flight of RTLM to Zaire: “Interahamwe militiamen from Zaire put pressure on the populations of Bugarama and Gishoma to force them to leave Rwanda. Radio Mille Collines’ equipment was seized by the ZAF at the border crossing at Bukavu.”⁶¹⁸

In the end, the late arrival of electronic warfare means that it is possible to listen to the silence of the radio stations with resources that have become considerable, as the head of the intelligence office pointed out in a summary memo on 2 August, 1994: “It is very unlikely that broadcasts from this radio station have not been picked up [...] Since the 17th, apart from reported broadcasts, no action has been taken by these three radio stations.”⁶¹⁹

In the course of defending himself against accusations of a form of tolerance towards extremist radio stations, General Lafourcade mentioned that at the beginning of August the Turquoise force seemed to have maintained a significant electronic warfare system in order to monitor them.⁶²⁰ This attests to the awareness of the problem of radio stations. This understanding continued throughout Operation Turquoise and afterwards. Thus, in mid-September, the SIRPA, analyzing the role of the media during Turquoise, returned to Hutu radio stations in unequivocal terms:

*The official speeches stating that the radio had stopped broadcasting as of 19 July were not taken up by the media. Indeed, many articles devoted well beyond that date to the responsibilities of the station in the organization of the exodus, and to the fact that it continued to broadcast. It might have been wise to stop these broadcasts, which were unanimously recognized as dangerous and of great impact.*⁶²¹

Turquoise and the Need for Local Government

In the SHZ, the presence of a very large population of refugees and displaced persons in precarious conditions, the continuous presence of violent and threatening groups, and the flight of a large number of administrative and political officials left the French troops with a dilemma: to administer the zone or not? This dilemma was gradually resolved - in fact, but not in law - at the end of July, when the SHZ was stabilized, if not recognized, and the last authorities of the interim government were finally on the run. Thus, based on a broad interpretation of the mandate to ensure the security of the population of the SHZ, the French forces gradually became involved, supporting and advising on the establishment of transitional intermediary structures to meet the basic needs of the population.

The involvement of the French forces was initially due to the disappearance, for various reasons, of the local authorities. On 22 July, Colonel Rosier emphasized that, in the zone under his control, his men had to ensure daily security because the police had disappeared: “night patrols in Rukondo, because before fleeing, local policemen went so far as to hand over their weapons to us (7 guns).”⁶²² On the same day, in his report from the south of the SHZ, Colonel Hogard made the same observation: “The grouping is gradually replacing the

local structures.”⁶²³ On 24 July, he reported to General Lfourcade that in his zone “the main concern remains - in addition to security - the restoration of the functions essential to the life of the population (running water and health care facilities).”⁶²⁴ For him, the restoration of these essential functions meets the needs of the population, which fears the violence of the RPF as reported in the accounts.⁶²⁵ The SHZ is also plagued by real violence, which is the work of former government soldiers: “the FAR continue to racketeer Rwandans at the border in both directions.”⁶²⁶ Colonel Hogard was pleased with this administrative renewal, and tried to get resources to improve its effectiveness.⁶²⁷

Following the initial observation, the priority was the restoration of security structures.⁶²⁸ In particular, the establishment of these committees was intended to enable the creation of institutions and procedures capable of responding to the threat posed by looters. In a long message to General Lfourcade, Colonel Hogard detailed the measures he had taken: firstly, they aimed to control the men with weapons, thanks to a weapon issued by Turquoise. Next, a distinction is made between situations where individuals, soldiers and gendarmes, looters and blockades are encountered. In each case, disarmament is envisaged, as well as interrogation, before releasing them outside the zone if they cannot be imprisoned.⁶²⁹ The FAR camp appears to be an area that is difficult to reach directly by Turquoise: “Until further notice, the FAR camp, prefecture zone remains the only zone ‘controlled’ by the FAR, no action outside of liaisons should be carried out there.”⁶³⁰

On 29 July, General Lfourcade reported on the setting up of administrative structures, which was seen as both the culmination of Turquoise’s work in the field and a condition for efficiency:

*However, the intermediate or provisional structures for the management of the towns are being set up under the impetus of the group commanders and are giving excellent results. This is how the southern group was able to reactivate several gendarmeries and how the Kamembe dispensary reopened with the help of a Rwandan doctor and the civil security forces.*⁶³¹

Colonel Sartre presented an update on the organization of local structures to Admiral Lanxade, who was on an inspection tour in Goma and the SHZ on 27 and 28 July.⁶³²

He justified the urgency of the matter by the serious security problems that Turquoise could not take on alone or in the long term. The colonel clearly explained the diversity of the tasks and their weight, as well as the problematic consequences in the long term. The army is responsible for providing care, food, and preventing massacres (possibly by using weapons and at the risk of being criticized, “but that’s fine as long as you’re in the emotion”). It must prevent looting, investigate robberies, murders, which is not feasible.⁶³³ This type of action constitutes a danger, he believes, because it pushes the army to intervene too deeply in everyday problems that are not part of its mission and “we are in a neo-colonial situation, and it won’t be long before we are reproached for it [...]. We will end up slipping one day or another.”⁶³⁴

Colonel Sartre adds that “the country will not be able to live for long with this total absence of administration, particularly communal administration”: this attracts the RPF, so the administration must be reorganized and the army is working on this, as he explains. In addition to the camp committees, an “initiative committee” was set up in Gikongoro to revive public life, inform NGOs and look after security problems. The Turquoise soldiers support the burgomasters, often of PSD tendency, who have remained in place because they did not feel too threatened by the RPF; others are appointed on a provisional basis; all of them are recognized by the population and many ask the soldiers to put them in touch with the RPF.⁶³⁵ This is a delicate subject, especially for the soldiers who are not in charge of the camps.

General Lafourcade was in favour of intervention, but “within the limits of the SHZ” because the army could not support the new cadres; Admiral Lanxade was also very reserved. However, in addition to these fears, there was also the fear of an increase in the exodus, which they wanted to limit, and the question of the transfer of command to UNAMIR and General Dallaire.⁶³⁶

The provisional administrative structures set up in the SHZ were an important part of the contact efforts undertaken by General Lafourcade with Paul Kagame. The importance of these structures for the French can be measured by the disappointment in the RPF’s lack of interest in them: “Its only concerns were the following: Punish the perpetrators of the massacres, Recover the weapons kept by

Turquoise, Denounce the training of the FAR organized by Turquoise in the SHZ.”⁶³⁷ Thus, on 3 August, in a message, General Lfourcade emphasized the major actions of Turquoise, evoked the transition that the withdrawal of the French had made necessary, and pushed for this:

*Contacts between the provisional administrative officials and the civilian authorities of the new Rwandan government can be envisaged in the SHZ with the backing of the UN, i.e. under the responsibility of UNAMIR.*⁶³⁸

At the end of July, as the Turquoise force began to withdraw, the Force Commanders outlined the provisional administration of the SHZ.⁶³⁹

*In the SHZ, the group commanders have immediately endeavored, in close collaboration with the population, to set up regional management and administrative bodies with the essential aim of creating an environment conducive to a rapid return to normal life [...]The structures thus set up are obviously only of an intermediate nature. They could be intended to take over the transition from UNAMIR and then from the Rwandan government authorities.*⁶⁴⁰

From the very first paragraphs, the document, although several pages long, emphasizes all of its limitations, which are due first of all to the mandate of Turquoise, which is not intended to last and even less to administer, but which in fact cannot function without interlocutors, even transitional ones, otherwise the force would become a de facto occupying political power.⁶⁴¹ Thus, the Turquoise force is present at all administrative levels,⁶⁴² to serve as a relay and be in contact with the populations,⁶⁴³ to restore public security, public health and public services. An assessment is included:

*This is why, at the request of the committees, the Turquoise forces have: Ensured the guarding of power plants, generators of water pumping stations; Participated in the restoration of distribution networks; Restarted public transportation by requisitioning stolen vehicles; Ensured the security of local markets.*⁶⁴⁴

5.4.3.3 ORGANIZING EXCHANGES WITH THE RPF AT THE SHZ BORDER

In Butare, the collapse of the FAR line, behind which the French forces were planning to deploy, puts them in difficulty against the RPF. This scenario is both the one that the French command

sought to avoid and one that it nevertheless had prepared for.

Thus, the planning elements of Operation Turquoise show that direct confrontation with the RPF was not sought. It was even the desire to avoid proximity to the RPF that underpinned the precautions taken by the forces to verify information on the massacres underway in Bisesero. However, from the moment the operation was planned, the possibility of dissuading, if necessary with weapons, an adversary engaged in a confrontation of a certain intensity was also retained. The logistics directive of 23 June, 1994, therefore assumed - and this was necessarily high - that the French forces would be wounded twenty times a day, and that there would be losses. This forecast, which was never verified, gave the Turquoise force the capacity to sustain a major military engagement.

The operation order of 22 June unambiguously allowed the French command in the theater to engage militarily in order to accomplish its mission. Opposing the RPF, if necessary by force, was always foreseen in the initial orders that implemented Operation Turquoise by General Germanos.

The panic of early July 1994

As we have seen, until the beginning of July, the Turquoise force, following the state's negotiations with the RPF, made the avoidance of contacts on the ground a priority.⁶⁴⁵ The collapse of the FAR from the first days of July onwards was perceived as highly problematic by the command,⁶⁴⁶ as it left the French forces in contact with those of the RPF, not only in Butare, but also throughout the zone where the French continued their deployment,⁶⁴⁷ in a context of uncertainty about intentions, which made it necessary to take precautions, i.e. to anticipate the possibility of a power struggle. Thus, Colonel Sartre describes a "Yugoslavian atmosphere that can either calm down if my patrols impress or explode if an extraction goes wrong."⁶⁴⁸ This atmosphere was fueled, in the mind of the French command, by the prospect of seeing the RPF advance to the Zairian border, and push populations in front of it, voluntarily or not, leading to the destabilization of Kivu. Moreover, at the beginning of July, the French government's position on the IRG was not

yet completely clear-cut and weighed on the way the RPF was viewed. Thinking in terms of opposition to the RPF appeared to be a way of preventing French positions from being taken by Front soldiers, and of keeping negotiation options open.

In the order given by the EMA Deputy Chief of Operations in Paris, the defense of a line to prevent the RPF from passing is explicitly linked to the execution of the humanitarian mission to protect refugees. "I confirm the agreement to hold the Gikongoro-Kibuye line and to remain in Gikongoro in particular to protect the refugees in accordance with the humanitarian mission that has been entrusted to you."⁶⁴⁹ In the mind of General Germanos, the RPF's advance was therefore a threat to the refugee camps.

The idea of the threat posed by the RPF was fuelled by the contacts the French had with representatives of the FAR, the IRG and youth organizations. For example, the commander of the Sierra group, Colonel Hogard, reported a contact on 3 July that he described as "fortuitous" with the Minister of Transport of the IRG in Cyangugu.⁶⁵⁰ On this occasion, the Minister reportedly expressed his concern about the ability of the FAR to hold out in Kigali and also in Butare. Thus, the prospect of the arrival of the RPF in Gikongoro became clearer; a letter from a student in Butare indicating the advance of the RPF and the threat that this posed was handed over by Colonel Hogard to EMMIR.⁶⁵¹ The fall, during the night, of the two towns of Kigali and Butare confirmed the inability of the FAR to confront the RPF troops, and transformed the French forces into the main obstacle to its advance towards the south-west. Indeed, with Butare having fallen, this led to a considerable reinforcement of French resources in Gikongoro, which was under greater threat.⁶⁵² General Lafourcade gave orders to this effect: "COS group: to continue the presence in the area in order to oppose the progression of the RPF in the Gikongoro region."⁶⁵³

By explicitly stating that it was necessary to be able to oppose the RPF's advance towards the west, General Lafourcade transposed into orders for his men the instructions that had been sent the day before from Paris by General Germanos, which gave Colonel Rosier's group and the special forces resources that were originally far removed from reconnaissance missions: "Reinforce the COS group

with two AML platoons and half a SML plus two CRAP teams and a CRAP command.”⁶⁵⁴ Colonel Rosier was thus equipped with two groups of elite soldiers from the search and action commandos from the regiments of the 11th parachute division. He then benefited from improved human intelligence resources, since reconnaissance of enemy lines was one of the very first missions of these paratroopers, as well as from a greater number of soldiers trained in high-intensity combat. The two AML platoons allow it to have a strong armored element on wheels with artillery. Reinforcement of the artillery was extended by sending the half-SML which provided mortars. Thus, on 4 July, at Gikongoro, Colonel Rosier was in position to oppose the RPF with significant firepower. The importance of the resources at his disposal is explained by General Lafourcade: “The RPF would have 106 cannons, heavy machine guns and 82 mm mortars and mines that infiltrators would lay on the routes and at crossroads in the rear.”⁶⁵⁵ The RPF artillery therefore exerted pressure - at least psychologically - on the French command, which wanted to avoid taking risks.

The reinforcement of French resources in Gikongoro also had the effect of weakening Colonel Sartre’s Northern Group, since the armoured and support resources were taken from the forces of the marine tank infantry regiment that he commanded and which formed the backbone of his group: “At the moment, if the RPF pushes towards Kibuye, I only have six AMLs left without a single wrench to throw at them, because I have put my meagre support into the hands of this detachment. We know that Kibuye will be the RPF’s objective.”⁶⁵⁶

By pointing out that, in his opinion, Kibuye was going to be the RPF’s next objective, Colonel Sartre made it clear that this imminent military threat from the RPF was strongly felt throughout the French positions.

The rise in tensions between Turquoise and the RPF

The announcements of the creation of the SHZ did not seem to profoundly alter the situation and the feelings of the French forces. Thus, on 6 July, General Lafourcade asked about the situation and the RPF’s intentions:

Since yesterday, the situation has not changed in substance. The RPF has stopped

*and the announcement made on the 5th that it was moving into a more political and diplomatic phase seems to be reflected in a reduction of military actions.*⁶⁵⁷

His doubts and questions seem to be giving way to greater certainty insofar as, the next day, the planning of air support for the COS positions in Gikongoro is ordered.⁶⁵⁸ If the preparation of air support does not mean that it will be used, it attests to a certain mistrust of the RPF's plans and a desire to acquire effective means of response, if not deterrence. The search for dissuasion as an instrument to save time appears to be the strategy dictated to General Lafourcade by Paris. Thus, on 8 July, as RPF units passed through the SHZ towards the west, he received this instruction: "The instructions given by the deputy chief of OPS are as follows: Clarify the intelligence. Show our willingness and deter them by advancing a French element on the RPF axis of progression. Put the air assets over Zaire on alert."⁶⁵⁹

The RPF entered Birambo⁶⁶⁰ and the French thought that its strategy was to advance, despite the SHZ, hence the desire to dissuade it, and the need for means of communication with the RPF. Thus, another incident, on 10 July, was resolved by an exchange of messages with General Dallaire and allowed an RPF liaison officer to be sent to Goma.⁶⁶¹ In a letter dated 11 July, addressed to General Lafourcade, General Kagame expressed his satisfaction with this situation: "Like you, I continue to be delighted that there have been no incidents between our forces and I hope that the installation of a liaison officer equipped with means of communication can only strengthen this climate."⁶⁶²

Despite these satisfactions, General Kagame emphasizes that he does not consider Operation Turquoise to be primarily a humanitarian operation. In fact, the situation remained tense, since between 10 and 12 July, the French forces reported RPF attempts to infiltrate the SHZ.⁶⁶³ What may appear to be an ongoing improvement in relations with RPF forces on the border does not prevent the implementation of defensive positions to ward off new attempts to enter the SHZ. Thus, on 12 July, Lieutenant-Colonel de Stabenrath reported to COMFORCE on how he was organizing the positions of the Northern Group in order to be able to face the RPF at the Nkoto ridge.⁶⁶⁴ In this context, he asked for instructions in case the RPF

“continued to fire on civilians working inside the SHZ,”⁶⁶⁵ while pointing out that a CRAP team was keeping “visual track” of RPF positions at the border of the zone.⁶⁶⁶ This is what happened in the case of the RPF. In fact, we are witnessing what seems to be, for the French, a movement to fortify the border of the SHZ, as indicated in a report from the COS group.⁶⁶⁷

In the eyes of the French command, the RPF was changing tactics in relation to the SHZ ⁶⁶⁸: special forces operators intercepted an RPF raid in the SHZ at Kamana while reporting that two people had been abducted the day before at Gikongoro.⁶⁶⁹ Another indication of this change in tactics is the incident of 16 July near the church in Rambura, when an RPF group pursued FAR and clashed with French elements of the RICM,⁶⁷⁰ leaving one French person wounded as a result of mortar and small arms fire.⁶⁷¹ The matter was settled by the intervention of Colonel Sartre, but it led to the alerting of air assets.⁶⁷² The intelligence officer of the Northern Group concluded: “The RPF did not seem very sure of the exact boundaries of the SHZ. The front line has joined the SHZ between the Ndaba pass and hill 523 since this evening.”⁶⁷³

This incident, as well as the rise in tensions around the Goma platform where the French command was based, and where the flow of refugees from Rwanda was increasing daily, led General Lafourcade, in his daily report, to remain very cautious in his analysis of the RPF’s attitude, which was still considered to be bellicose and aimed at controlling the SHZ.⁶⁷⁴ On the same day, the French command in Paris was considering the possibility of the RPF forcing its way, as General Germanos pointed out in a memo:

What should be done if the RPF attempts a forced entry into the humanitarian zone before 21 August? ...] In the event of an RPF attack, it will be necessary to respond firmly, preferably using “strike” means (heavy mortars, air strikes) in order to clearly show our determination without allowing ourselves to be held by the RPF. The level of our response should dissuade the RPF from pursuing this course.⁶⁷⁵

The response to this situation would, according to him, be fundamentally political in nature, involving mobilization of the UN. On 17 July, General Lafourcade noted that, in a context where “the RPF does not seem to be willing to negotiate either with the members of the provisional government or with the military authorities,”⁶⁷⁶ tensions were likely to rise

very quickly. He reminded Paris that “an incident with our troops on 16 July on the edge of the SHZ bears witness to the bellicose ardor of its troops.”⁶⁷⁷ It is noteworthy that the author of the daily report clearly moderates his analysis by not directly attributing to the RPF as a whole and, more particularly, to its leadership, “the bellicose ardor” which he limits to the troops by insisting on the plural.⁶⁷⁸

While the permanence of the RPF’s military threat is still apparent, a form of resolution on the part of the French in Goma appears implicitly, that of having only the RPF as an interlocutor in Rwanda. In spite of everything, the growing pressure of the RPF became a critical concern for the command, as General Laffourcade noted in his order of conduct on 19 July.⁶⁷⁹

This pessimistic reading led to a strengthening of the French position in Goma.⁶⁸⁰ This strengthening was accentuated on 19 July, firstly by the alerting of air assets,⁶⁸¹ and then when General Laffourcade requested the deployment of a mortar section from the 35th parachute artillery regiment.⁶⁸² This section had to be capable of carrying out an airborne raid. “The order given to the SML and the *détachement* [*Detachment aviation légère de l’armée de Terre*] in Goma was: “to be able to carry out an artillery raid with two mortars for the benefit of the groups with two hours’ notice.”⁶⁸³ The system that the general intended to put in place was a combination that the French army had mastered, combining the mobility afforded by manoeuvring helicopters and the firepower that a mortar group could apply. The artillery raid thus makes it possible to reach an enemy position very quickly, and to retreat immediately without taking the risk of a counterattack or counter-battery fire. This is a very sophisticated technique, but one that aims to give the commander of the Turquoise force a decisive superiority over what he sees as a potential threat to Goma. At the same time, he announced the strengthening of electronic intelligence capabilities in order to monitor the RPF’s exchanges and gain a better understanding of its intentions.⁶⁸⁴ Thus, by 20 July, the Turquoise force was in a position to oppose any RPF attempt to force its way into the SHZ or Goma. It is clear that, perhaps because of the deterrent nature of these measures, there are no longer any major tensions on the line of contact between

the French forces and the RPF forces. The provisions for the implementation of the artillery raid were quickly cancelled. Moreover, in a message to the entire Turquoise force, dated 24 July, General Lafourcade announced to his staff what he described as the end of the RPF's military ambitions against the SHZ, which allowed the French to shift to prepare for disengagement in August.⁶⁸⁵

Waiting as a tactic: RPF facing the SHZ

The reality of the dissuasive effect sought is not specified by General Lafourcade, who does, however, observe an inflection in the RPF's tactics with regard to the SHZ: "At the same time, the RPF is stepping up its pressure on the outskirts of the SHZ, and even inside it, and is trying to rally the populations that have taken refuge there to its cause by inviting them to take part in information meetings close to the SHZ boundaries."⁶⁸⁶ Euphemistically speaking, this is a definitive form of thawing of French relations with RPF forces on the edge of the SHZ. A diplomatic telegram of 22 July, sent by the central administration, confirms the agreement of the RPF on the limits of the SHZ.⁶⁸⁷

"On the military level, the situation is stabilizing and even normalizing."⁶⁸⁸ French military intelligence noted that the RPF was establishing itself along the line of the SHZ, but this was not interpreted as the source of threats, but as a form of normalization: it was consolidating its positions along the SHZ. The normalization is accompanied by a change in tactics and a shift by the RPF to a kind of political propaganda.⁶⁸⁹ The author of the memo emphasized that the Kigali government, which wanted the refugees to return, also had to settle the question of the houses requisitioned by the RPF. The next day, Paris informed General Lafourcade that following the visit of a French delegation to Kigali, it was planned that the Kigali government would visit the SHZ, but it would no longer claim control of the Ndaba pass, which had been a subject of tension in the previous weeks.⁶⁹⁰ More locally, on 24 July, the COS grouping reported contacts between the bishop of Gikongoro and a representative of the RPF, who was clearly seeking appeasement.⁶⁹¹

As the general tension subsides around the recognition of the border of the SHZ with the rest of Rwandan territory, the reports of the various French detachments insist on RPF abuses.

In general, French officers linked this information to the climate of tension fueled on the one hand by RPF incursions into the SHZ and on the other by the prospect of the departure of the French. This is what Colonel Hogard reported on 25 July.⁶⁹² These facts are presented by the French authors in the conditional tense, because the testimonies are difficult to verify. Moreover, when more in-depth investigations were carried out, the difficulty of reaching conclusions was never hidden, just like the lack of systematicity; this is what is shown by the summary proposed by the operators of the 13th RDP:

*If these testimonies are accurate, three hypotheses remain open: elimination of those responsible for massacres - Misbehavior of a single unit - Rivalries on the occasion of the return of refugees - UNAMIR investigation highly desirable.*⁶⁹³

It also appears that most of the violence attributed to the RPF, including incursions and abductions of people in the SHZ, is part of the search for those responsible for and involved in the genocide, as emphasized, for example, in a report by the Northern Group, which mentions blockades, filtering and executions.⁶⁹⁴ There are also reports of looting and infiltration by the RPF, although without weapons, “the aim of which would be to gather information on those responsible who were still present in the area and to encourage the population to return to the east.”⁶⁹⁵

Despite a peak in tension between the end of July and the month of August due to anti-French propaganda by radio stations linked to the RPF and an attempt to control the French barge on Lake Kivu,⁶⁹⁶ the RPF’s actions at the border were seen as less of a threat, as attested to by an analysis by General Lafourcade on 4 August.⁶⁹⁷ On 7 August, the threat had even disappeared from the analyses of the intelligence office of the general staff in Goma.⁶⁹⁸ The only ones identified were infiltrations from Burundi or Zaire,⁶⁹⁹ which seemed to also be perceived by the RPF, which was fortifying its border at the same time.⁷⁰⁰

On 14 August, 1994, the Minister of the Interior of the Kigali government visited the SHZ and a report was drawn up by the Turquoise staff,⁷⁰¹ a visit already described from a diplomatic source. During a meeting, the Minister reiterated the principle of not allowing the RPF to enter the SHZ before Turquoise had withdrawn and of a handover to UNAMIR. He reaffirmed the RPF’s opposition to a French presence

in UNAMIR because of France's support for the previous government in connection with the massacres.⁷⁰² The French author of the report points out that "the Minister would have recognized the usefulness of the intermediary committees as well as the municipal police forces, even though they were provisional."⁷⁰³

On 19 August, the Élysée and Matignon issued a joint communiqué emphasizing that "France had fulfilled its duty and made the international community aware of its own": "an end had been put to the massacres; massive humanitarian aid (...) had been distributed." The communiqué also emphasized that the term assigned to Operation Turquoise by Resolution 929 had been respected and that it was now up to "the Rwandan authorities and the international community to assume [...] all their responsibilities."⁷⁰⁴ On 21 August, the French troops left Rwanda for good. On 25 August, the President of the Republic sent a letter to François Léotard, Minister of Defense, in which he expressed "his complete satisfaction with the exemplary conduct of Operation Turquoise."⁷⁰⁵ What assessment can be made of this operation?

5.5 ASSESSMENT OF OPERATION TURQUOISE

According to Jean-Marc Simon's handwritten notes, on 29 June, during a meeting of the crisis unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bernard de Montferrand, diplomatic advisor to Édouard Balladur, declared: "We will be judged on the results."⁷⁰⁶ This point draws a multi-faceted assessment of Operation Turquoise. First, he emphasizes that, unlike France's previous policy in Rwanda, some elements of which were deliberately concealed,⁷⁰⁷ Operation Turquoise was heavily publicized in order to defend its legitimacy. He also shows that, while France was criticized, it was also praised for its action. He then gives voice to actors who drew different conclusions from their experience: two diplomats and several military personnel, before attempting, in accordance with the objective of the operation, a humanitarian assessment.

5.5.1 A highly publicized operation

During this same meeting, and again according to Jean-Marc Simon's notes, General Germanos added: "We fear that the journalists

will pull us forward.⁷⁰⁸ Two days earlier, a diplomatic telegram sent to ambassadors on the implementation of Operation Turquoise emphasized the need to publicize the humanitarian intervention.⁷⁰⁹ Indeed, this intervention was highly publicized from the outset. The beginning was marked in the field by the protection, covered by cameras, of 8,000 Tutsi in the Cyangugu camp.⁷¹⁰ The beginning was marked in Paris by long press briefings, such as the one on 24 June when the Minister of Defense, François Léotard, the Chief of Defense Staff, Admiral Lanxade, and his deputy, General Germanos, presented the reasons for the operation to an audience of journalists, before answering their questions, which were at times critical and anxious.⁷¹¹

The media coverage of Operation Turquoise was intended by the political authorities to disarm criticism of the operation, both in France and abroad, and to justify its legitimacy. At the 22 June meeting of the core cabinet, Alain Juppé expressed concern about the media's perception of Operation Turquoise and the risks to France's image: "If we succeed, our courage will be praised, but if, in a second phase, things get worse after we withdraw, we will be blamed. It is therefore necessary that everyone understand that this is a rescue operation."⁷¹² "Disarming critics" by giving "a media echo" to a decision or action: these expressions are frequently used, for example in the diplomatic telegram sent on 23 June, 1994, to the French permanent representative to the UN so that he would widely publicize France's offer of assistance to the special rapporteur for human rights in Rwanda, assistance to enter Rwandan territory and accomplish its mission.⁷¹³

The media coverage was accepted and organized on the ground by the military, who speak, for some, of a "media maneuver" and for others of a "media environment". The first term appears in the "situation reports" of the Armed Forces General Staff, alongside entries on operational activities, troop deployment or foreign participation. For example, the report dated 26 June indicates that "some thirty journalists, including Mr. Poivre d'Arvor, joined those already present in Bukavu this morning before being integrated into the operational set-up; some of them accompanied the helicopter detachment to Kibuye, the others went on to

Cyangugu and Kibuye.”⁷¹⁴ The second term appears in particular in the words of Stanislas d’Arbonneau, the Marine deputy to the Prime Minister’s military chief of staff. In a memo dated 25 July 1994, he emphasized that “the interest of the media in Goma is growing and there are 150 journalists on the ground.”⁷¹⁵ At the end of June, his colleague from the Army, Jean-Louis Georgelin, noted, mistakenly

*“The number of journalists and technicians seems to be stabilizing at around 100 people. The journalists, who continue to accompany the reconnaissance missions, are very satisfied with the relations they have with the military, but their large numbers are a nuisance for the troops.”*⁷¹⁶

These French and international journalists, who were present in Zaire and the SHZ in large numbers, produced a great many agency dispatches - AFP and Reuters in particular - and numerous press articles, as well as reports for radio and television. Agency dispatches and newspaper articles are collected and assembled in press files by the communication officers of the ministries, particularly at the Ministry of Cooperation.⁷¹⁷ They were also studied at the Élysée, sometimes annotated - paragraphs underlined or checked off, comments added in the margins or simple exclamation marks or question marks - by the Africa advisor, Bruno Delaye, or by Hubert Védrine, who submitted those that seemed problematic to François Mitterrand.

The relationship between the military, who were invited to organize press briefings in the field to explain their mission and to cut short fake news or that considered as such, and the journalists, most of whom remembered France’s previous policy in Rwanda and wrote critical articles on the subject, was not always easy. On 6 July, General Germanos came to inspect. In a press briefing organized with General Lafourcade to “clearly show the purpose of a mission,” he particularly welcomed the sometimes hostile journalists present in difficult places. However, he did not hesitate to interrupt one of them to repeat what he felt had not been heard: “The problem is that we did not come here, and I repeat it, and I will repeat it as many times as you ask me the question, to take or help this or that party. We came here to deal with an obvious humanitarian need.”⁷¹⁸ Another example: in a debriefing with the Chief of Staff, who came to

visit on 27 and 28 July, Colonel Sartre told him that “communication must be improved,” because the refugee camps were compared by some to “Pol Pot-style concentration camps.”⁷¹⁹ Moreover, the presence of a large number of journalists could be embarrassing, especially for military doctors faced with emergency health situations. For example, a doctor from the EMMIR in Cyangugu complained on 12 July about the pressure from the media.⁷²⁰ For his part, Commander Marin Gillier, who returned to France on 30 July, emphasized, when sending his superior a report on the end of the mission, that “the presence of journalists imposed restrictions on the behavior and dress of the personnel, which was willingly accepted, but at the cost of a certain effort.” He also points out the difficulty in defining “the limit between the information to be protected and the element to be disclosed as a priority.”⁷²¹

However, the results appear positive to General Lafourcade, who justifies the media coverage at the end of Turquoise:

*I am particularly satisfied [...] with the way we worked in this operation, in a transparent manner. I believe that the public has the right to be informed. It is often difficult for us, [in] difficult operations and activities, to have this burden that you nonetheless represent, because you represent a burden: you have to be taken to the field to see what is happening. And the conclusion I draw from that is that it's more important that you see what's going on than the other way around.*⁷²²

The army itself produces its own images and reports on Operation Turquoise. This is the role of the army's film establishment⁷²³(ECPA), which sends two teams to the field in succession.⁷²⁴ One of them followed the military authorities closely, filming and interviewing General Lafourcade and the various elements of the army. Each one explained his responsibilities and tasks and showed himself in action. When a member of the government visits - the Minister of Defense and the Minister for Humanitarian Action on 29 June, the Minister of Health on 23 July - or when the Chief of Staff of the Army visits, the press is of course present, but the ECPA team benefits from a greater proximity that allows it to film a few meetings. These reports, even if very formatted, constitute original sources for historians, especially the rushes before cutting and editing. They have been used several times in this report.

The media does not always produce the desired effect. An informed opinion is also a critical opinion, and France was both praised and criticized for Operation Turquoise.

5.5.2 An operation both criticized and praised

It is not possible to offer here an exhaustive analysis of the contemporaneous reactions to Operation Turquoise, both in France and abroad. It would require a lengthy study of the content of the national and foreign press, of diplomatic telegrams sent from various capitals, and of all the declarations of international organizations, NGOs, and numerous political figures. This section presents only a few elements to underline the fact that during the summer of 1994, the criticisms were not unanimous, quite the contrary, and that there was even an evolution towards a positive appreciation of the operation, punctuated, however, by accusations that echoed those made by the RPF, for example, concerning the establishment of an administration in the SHZ.⁷²⁵ Thus, during the interview given on 14 July by François Mitterrand, journalists Patrick Poivre d'Arvor and Alain Duhamel opened what they called "the big, very bloody international file" on Rwanda with these words: "Operation Turquoise is going rather well compared to the pessimistic forecasts, in any case there are no clashes with the RPF, human lives are being saved." Interrupted by the President of the Republic, who justified French policy and recounted the history of Rwanda, they nevertheless mentioned the reluctance of NGOs to participate in the operation, which was seen as a way for France "to regain its innocence after having supported the government for years."⁷²⁶

France reacted belatedly to the genocide, but it was the only one to try to do something, "at its own risk and peril," as François Mitterrand still said on 14 July, 1994, repeating once again that it was primarily the role of the United Nations. Several bodies expressed their gratitude, in particular and on several occasions the UN in the person of its Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who had been very supportive in the adoption of Resolution 929. On 11 July, he thanked the French government for its initiative, during the visit of Edouard Balladur

and Alain Juppé to the United Nations. On 22 July, while calling on the international community to confront “a new genocide by hunger, by thirst, by disease” and to accelerate the deployment of UNAMIR, he took advantage of the occasion to emphasize that “the French presence in southwestern Rwanda has been useful” and to thank France for its humanitarian action.⁷²⁷ Four weeks later, on 19 August, France’s representative to the UN reported that:

*Mr. Boutros-Ghali first wanted to publicly thank the French government for the action it had undertaken in Rwanda. He said that the courage with which the French operation in the Safe Humanitarian Zone had been conducted had made it possible to save thousands of human lives and to accelerate the arrival of UNAMIR troops who would take over from the French soldiers in Rwanda.*⁷²⁸

His special representative in Rwanda, Shaharyar Khan, whom Ambassador François Descoueyte met in Kigali on 6 August, was also full of praise for Operation Turquoise and its commander-in-chief, General Lafourcade, “a pillar” whose composure knew how to thwart provocations and who was able to set up smooth coordination with UNAMIR. The problem, in his eyes, was to ensure the replacement of the “first class” French forces by UNAMIR units “at the end of their tether.”⁷²⁹ Even General Dallaire recognized the success of Operation Turquoise in early August, while considering it imperative “for the future stability of the country” - a sign of persistent mistrust? – to respect the departure date of the French military.⁷³⁰ As for the OAU, it showed restraint and did not show any hostility to the operation.⁷³¹

The ambassadors were quick to point out to their supervisory authorities any positive manifestations they received from their interlocutors. Thus, on 10 August, the ambassador in Washington, reporting on a conversation with Douglas Bennet, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations, reported that “he paid tribute to Operation Turquoise,” stating that “someone had to intervene” and that “France’s action had been very important.”⁷³² This is the case, for example, of the British government, which did not share the criticism of its national press and considered, at the end of July, that France had saved hundreds of thousands of human lives and that its motives were “solely humanitarian.”⁷³³

The ambassadors also reported on the tone of the press in their country of residence, pointing out in more detail the articles that expressed a certain hostility, particularly in Belgium those by Colette Braeckmann in *Le Soir*. On 10 July, the journalist, while acknowledging that France had made it possible to save several thousand Tutsi and that the SHZ constituted a shelter for displaced persons, denounced a “deception,” since the humanitarian mission was, in her eyes, coupled with a rescue mission for government forces.⁷³⁴ Later articles praised the RPF while beginning to criticize it for not paying enough attention to civilian life. On 6 August, the daily published the “free opinion” of a former cooperant who believed that “France was right to try to stop the massacre,” even if Operation Turquoise did not have the desired effect.⁷³⁵ Two days later, Colette Braeckmann described the SHZ as a new “French colony” and accused the Turquoise forces of doing nothing to encourage refugees to return to Rwanda.⁷³⁶ But in mid-August, her newspaper, relaying the fear of humanitarians of a massive flight of refugees to Zaire and Burundi, headlined: “Anguished Countdown in Rwanda and Burundi.”⁷³⁷

No article from *Le Soir* on Turquoise is preserved in the archives of the Élysée’s Africa advisor, perhaps because, being traditionally hostile to French policy in Africa, its content is not surprising. On the other hand, there is an interview published in the *Corriere della Serra* with Jean Birara, former Governor General of the Bank of Rwanda, who has been a refugee in Brussels since April and who is expected to become Minister of Economic Planning in Kigali. Under the title “Rwanda, a paradise for drugs and arms,” the interviewee presents “Mitterrand junior” as an arms and drugs trafficker, asserts that France knew about the airplane attack and did nothing to prevent it, considers Operation Turquoise “a mystery” but stresses that the SHZ is a territory “literally covered with marijuana and coca crops.”⁷³⁸ The archives also contain an article by Stephen Smith - “Retour sur un attentat non élucidé” (*Libération*, 29 July, 1994, “Revisiting an Unexplained Terrorist Attack”) - which Hubert Védrine noted as “highly significant,” as well as a dossier in *Le Point* entitled “Rwanda, la peur ou le choléra” (30 July, 1994, “Rwanda, Fear or Cholera”). The dossier includes an article by Mireille Duteil that reviews the “very long history” of relations between France and Rwanda,

a political portrait of Health Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy - a portrait illustrated by a photo taken in Goma on 24 July amidst a line of bodies -, and an interview with anthropologist Georges Balandier. The latter returns to “the real reasons for the genocide,” including “a poorly done post-colonial history,” “little regard for the nature of the regimes in place.” To the question about the intervention of France, he answers:

France was wrong not to stay there at the crucial moment and, above all, not to foresee the drama. The signs existed long before. The most radical Hutus were preventing the establishment of pluralism. France, which was responsible for the military leadership, should have offered the government a deal. It supported the Hutu and ultimately allowed armed militias to form. Its position seems incomprehensible. Now there are too many dead, too many refugees. Humanitarian policy is the only one possible at this time.⁷³⁹

An operation that does honor to France or an operation with dubious motives? French parliamentarians were also divided on the subject, with the Communist deputies being the only ones truly opposed to the intervention in the name of anti-colonialism and using every means at their disposal to condemn the intervention and demand a debate on the subject. On the whole, elected officials did not exercise much control over French policy in Rwanda during the two months that Turquoise lasted, including a period of parliamentary recess: only one written question in the National Assembly,⁷⁴⁰ where, however, there was a question session to the government on 23 June, with several speakers,⁷⁴¹ and a debate on 30 June; in the Senate, six written questions. Senator Emmanuel Hamel of the Rhône (RPR) asked two questions on the handover to UNAMIR - on 7 and 21 July - and another on the same day to point out that “the genocide that is being perpetrated in Rwanda and the participation of the French army in the protection of threatened populations compete in the press, television and radio with comments, reports and information on the action of the French military [...] in Bosnia.”⁷⁴² Of the three other questions, none came from the Senate left, none expressed any criticism of Operation Turquoise: one asks whether one can demand “silent neutrality” from a Rwandan political refugee from the RPF who expresses himself virulently in the media;⁷⁴³ the other wishes

to know what initiatives the government has taken to “ensure that the perpetrators of acts of genocide are sought out and judged.”⁷⁴⁴ The last question was surprised by the United States’ willingness to intervene in Haiti instead of “following the example of France, which has invested its men, its planes and all the available equipment in this great humanitarian work” that is Operation Turquoise.⁷⁴⁵

However, several parliamentarians made the trip to Rwanda to meet with the soldiers of the SHZ and to learn about the situation and the need for humanitarian aid: a Senate committee was filmed on July 11 by an ECPA team.⁷⁴⁶ Operation Turquoise was also often mentioned *a posteriori* in the autumn budget debates on the subject of Defense or cooperation appropriations, with some deputies recalling the lives saved thanks to the intervention⁷⁴⁷ and paying tribute to the soldiers sent to Rwanda, and others pointing out its illegitimate nature, like France’s entire Rwandan policy.

5.5.3 *The operation as seen by two diplomats and soldiers*

Yannick Gérard⁷⁴⁸ and Jean-Christophe Belliard, sent on a mission to Goma by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, gave an account of their mission. Yannick Gérard arrived in Goma on 30 June, 1994 and left on 25 July. He emphasizes the objective of his mission, which was to maintain relations in Goma with the “constituted Rwandan authorities,” adding that “it was understood, however, that these contacts were to be limited to the minimum necessary for the proper conduct of Operation Turquoise. That was the criterion. Any other useful contact with moderate Rwandan political figures who were in Goma was, moreover, encouraged.” He added that he was “asked to supervise the implementation of humanitarian action.” There are two salient points in his report. First, and this is the first point addressed, is the attention he paid to the radio stations, whose importance he considers to be “decisive”: “Radio Rwanda and Radio des Mille Collines, both governmental.” He explains: “I was stunned by the floods of ethnic hatred that it [RTLM] poured out on its listeners, the assimilation that was made there between the RPF and UNAMIR, and the agitation against the enemy, the Tutsi, who had

to be gotten rid of.” In this desire to understand and act on the ground, Yannick Gérard understands the key role of the media: “I immediately asked that our resources be put in place to allow me, at least, to follow these broadcasts from day to day.” He mentions that he asked the Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs and the advisor to the president, “founder of the Radion (sic) des Mille Collines,” that the authorities “stop the propaganda of the Mille Collines and exert their influence in the right direction.” The engagements “have not been respected.” In concrete terms, this means that he is asking for the means to intercept the broadcasts but also to have the content translated, which shows a certain desire for autonomy but also progress in relation to the policy followed by the French embassy at the end of 1993 and the beginning of 1994. On the other hand, he indicates that “at the same time, I collected damning and credible testimony on the behavior of some of these interlocutors during the previous months, which convinced me that they were indeed among the main perpetrators of the genocide, if only because of their control over Radio des Mille Collines.”

The report by Jean-Christophe Belliard is of a different tone. It does not deal with the political aspects of the mission, but with its material conditions. However, it does reveal some elements of interpretation of the relationship between French diplomats and soldiers on the ground. Jean-Belliard notes that

[...] The weak point of our operation was Bukavu, in South Kivu, where an agent of the emergency unit had been dispatched. However, Bukavu, close to the “SHZ,” was the ideal place to gather information on what was happening in southwestern Rwanda, the area where Operation “Turquoise” evolved. Since this work was hardly done, the Goma mission was permanently dependent on the humanitarian information that the French army was willing to provide. I therefore think that a diplomat should have been sent to Bukavu who would have been able to give us the essential information that was lacking towards the end of Operation Turquoise.⁷⁴⁹

He also notes that the “work done by our soldiers was remarkable in every respect. France, through its experience on the continent, was the only one able to intervene in this way.” For Jean-Christophe Belliard, it is not a question of opposing the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Defense, but of asserting its specificity and affirming, as he did during the Arusha negotiations in 1993, the need for autonomy of means.

What texts did the military produce? The end of mission report is an obligatory part of military writing insofar as it allows an officer with responsibility to give an account of the mission that has been entrusted to him. The end of an operation such as Operation Turquoise is therefore the occasion for the production of numerous reports at all levels of the operation. The end of mission report is an obligatory type of report that follows strict codes. First of all, it very rarely allows itself to make general or strategic comments about the mission, as this could undermine its foundations. In addition, they are usually very positive in tone, emphasizing to the higher authorities the success of the mission. Finally, the production of these reports feeds a cycle of internal reflection or feedback, and they can be an opportunity to make suggestions or remarks to improve certain points.

The main end of mission report on Operation Turquoise is the one signed by General Lafourcade.⁷⁵⁰ It was presented to the EMA in September 1994. It is organized in three volumes and reviews all the major elements of Operation Turquoise. This report is based on contributions from the various services, commands and units that took part in the operation, as well as on the accounts of the various officials. Its positive tone corresponds to the French analysis of the moment, fueled by the international recognition expressed between August and September 1994. It also highlights the special status of Operation Turquoise in French military history: the first large-scale joint operation after the end of the Cold War; an opportunity to validate military concepts that Operation Daguet, France's contribution to the first Gulf War, had highlighted, such as the difficulty and necessity for the different French armies to work in a single joint command post. There is therefore a political stake in underlining the real success of Operation Turquoise, which came at the end of one of the greatest cycles of transformation of the Ministry of Defense since 1992, a cycle led by Pierre Joxe.

In addition to the end of mission report of the force commander, there are a series of specific end-of-mission reports that are essentially positive and technical in tone. For example, the report by Chief Medical Officer Pons, who commanded the 14th parachute surgical unit which equipped the health unit in Goma, emphasized the reality of the French health effort, and detailed the care provided without dwelling on the question of the populations treated (for example, the FAR).⁷⁵¹ The only expression of sentiment and psychology in a technical report is contained in the passage where the chief medical officer explains why he asked for an expert in mental health to support the Turquoise soldiers in the face of the horrors they were witnessing. The report is also an opportunity to express a singular perception. For example, the temporality of Operation Turquoise noted by Colonel Hogard in his report is significantly different from that of General Lafourcade.⁷⁵²

The end of mission report is also a place where the balance of power within the armed forces is established, because it takes stock of strengths and weaknesses, and thus involves the future. This is how the report of Colonel Rosier, head of the Special Operations Command Group during the operation,⁷⁵³ should be read. It is divided into two parts, the first for general use and the second for internal use by General Le Page, commander of special operations. The first part contains the general satisfaction with the operation, but aims above all to defend the young special operations command and its specificities within the French army. In particular, Colonel Rosier vigorously defends the air assets specific to this group - maneuver helicopters (transporting troops and equipment) and C-130 tactical transport aircraft - and distinct from the air assets of the Turquoise force. The possession of autonomous means of mobility is a major feature of special operations and, at the time, represents a major innovation, as well as a real privilege, which must be defended to justify the exceptional concentration of means. The appendix of the report is intended for internal use by the special operations command, which, for employment purposes, has control over several units of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force. Bringing all these units under the same operational umbrella creates

power relations in a command that, at the time, is largely dominated by the main Army special forces regiment, the 1st RPIMa. During Turquoise, it was this regiment in particular that provided the COS with a large part of its command and transmission resources, giving it a central position, which Colonel Rosier did not fail to emphasize.

In addition to Colonel Rosier's report, the report of another senior special operations officer, Commander Marin Gillier, is enlightening on the function of end-of-mission reports.⁷⁵⁴ Gillier wrote a report that can be found in the Operation Turquoise archives, but which was primarily intended for his organic leader, the admiral commanding the riflemen and marine commandos in Lorient. To the latter, he presented the success of the operation, but at the same time pointed out the shortcomings that limited the action of the marine commando detachment within the special operations group. In particular, he emphasized the lack of secure communication means and the dependence on those of the 1st RPIMa. He also emphasized the lack of senior officers from the marine commandos, which placed the detachment in an inferior position compared to the Army, which mobilized a much larger number of senior officers, allowing it to have many local contacts at a high level.

Finally, a last variation in the genre constituted by the end of mission report is the report based on impressions,⁷⁵⁵ a memorandum written in a rather free style that aims less at a precise assessment than at opening up a reflection. It is in this category that the report written by Lieutenant-Colonel Lebel, who directs the intelligence of the Turquoise force,⁷⁵⁶ can be placed. In a freer style than the previous reports, it paints a fairly rich picture of the functioning of the PCIAT - the theater joint command post - and the occasional difficulties in integrating very voluminous intelligence, in particular the difficulty of transmitting it, due to the limitations of communication systems. This report is part of the evolution of the military intelligence function, in France in general and in the Army in particular, whose intelligence and electronic warfare resources were regrouped in 1993. This report also attests, at its own level, to the military experimental nature of Operation Turquoise.

5.5.4 *Humanitarian and medical assessment*

When the last French soldiers left Rwandan territory in August 1994, an initial assessment of the humanitarian action was drawn up; it immediately raised questions about the nature of the humanitarian action of the French soldiers. This humanitarian action within the framework of the Turquoise force was initially conceived as a prerequisite for action by NGOs in the refugee camps, some of which were reluctant to work with the military, at least at the beginning. A memo dated 22 June, written by the technical advisor to the Minister for Humanitarian Action and Human Rights and addressed to the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, specified the modalities. The military intended to “limit themselves to securing the troubled areas” and not to “take the place of humanitarian actors,” whom they expected to take charge of “liberated and protected populations.” However, given the reality of the camps, where the health situation was deplorable and the number of wounded was high, and given the multiplicity of sites and threats, the initial project, which also reflected the French political will to reduce its presence in Rwanda as much as possible, seemed to be outdated at the turn of June and July. Indeed, this period was also the time when the French command became aware of the permanence and omnipresence of genocidal threats to the Tutsi population in Rwanda. At the same time, a new objective emerged as the last military resources of the IRG were crushed: to prevent the predominantly Hutu population from crossing the border into Zaire, as the genocidal authorities wished, to set up camps. This urgency is all the greater since a cholera epidemic broke out in Goma, Zaire, in July.

Let us go back to the organization set up in Goma and in the SHZ. Administratively, it relies on two organizations: one is military, the “Civil Affairs” unit, and the other is civilian, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the “Humanitarian/Military Liaison Unit” set up in Goma under General Lafourcade.⁷⁵⁷ Both are responsible for assessing the situation and needs on the ground; they participate in the distribution of government humanitarian aid, and liaise and coordinate with UN bodies, various agencies, NGOs and religious communities. The

“civil affairs” unit also collects information on human rights and is responsible for briefing the media and the EMA. Health and medical issues are essential, the mobilization of men and means is impressive, and ECPA operators bring back striking images. Medical evacuations to the EMMIR - rapid intervention military medical establishment - in Goma or Cyangugu began early, with soldiers travelling daily through the SHZ to obtain information, evacuate serious cases, and provide the most basic or urgent care on the spot.

In the SHZ, the EMMIR, which allows refugees to be cared for on the spot, was set up in Cyangugu on 5 July and its operation is well documented by an ECPA report.⁷⁵⁸ The EMMIR is equipped with surgical equipment and a medical team. It has extensive surgical and medical equipment. The medical staff, made up of soldiers and reservists, treated all pathologies: bullet wounds, machete wounds and pickaxe wounds of victims of the war and genocide; local pathologies and infectious diseases (malaria, tuberculosis, dysentery, etc.), which were the most numerous; but the doctors and nurses also performed deliveries and took in babies and their mothers in a nursery.⁷⁵⁹ The spaces provided - 32 beds for pediatrics and 32 beds for adult medicine - were quickly saturated and it was difficult to accommodate more than 60 patients. The operating room was a veritable “beehive” where several operations were performed at the same time by a staff that worked up to eighty hours a week,⁷⁶⁰ despite the medical reinforcement of Mauritians starting on 10 July and the help of Rwandan doctors who were able to take in patients who had received emergency care.⁷⁶¹ The humanitarian role of EMMIR was such that it was envisaged to maintain its action, first in Rwanda, then in Zaire. The report on Operation Turquoise presented to the Minister of Defense on 11 October, 1994 gives the following details: 10,956 days of hospitalization, 14,656 medical consultations, 77,900 acts of care, including 1,086 surgical acts. These figures are high, but they must also be weighed against the scale of the needs of a large and weakened population.

The cholera epidemic, which broke out in July in Goma, is a scourge that the army is working to combat. General Lafourcade’s daily reports regularly point out the distress of the

people who are crowded into Goma in very difficult conditions, and the means that the French forces are using to come to their aid: the Bioforce of the Army Health Service is trying to contain the epidemic, and the airborne engineers are digging mass graves and burying bodies with shovels to prevent the spread of the disease. Images collected by ECPA show bodies being picked up along roadsides, packed, and loaded onto trucks. The best place for graves must be found outside the cities (of Goma or Kisangani), with pits dug several meters deep to bury between 850 and 1,000 bodies per day, even if it is difficult to count the victims. This task was so particular that General Lafourcade and Admiral Lanxade made it a point to travel to support those who were working on it.⁷⁶² “It is the French who are doing the dirty work, it is the honor of the French army [...]” said the CEMA in front of the press, adding that “we have come, as everyone can understand today, for humanitarian purposes.”⁷⁶³ Similarly, Bruno Delaye and General Quesnot described on 26 July to François Mitterrand - a memo already quoted - “exhausted and terrorized populations (1.2 million in Goma, 500,000 in Bukavu, 1.4 million in the safe humanitarian zone) [who] were experiencing hunger, thirst and cholera. The memo specifies that nearly 5,000 people die every day and that the task is “trying” for young soldiers.⁷⁶⁴

The Civil Affairs Unit of the Turquoise force, in assessing its actions, first emphasizes the very limited nature of its resources.⁷⁶⁵ Having had to deal with “requests for interventions and evacuations,” it counted 3,716 people who “were extracted and put out of danger, 515 of whom were evacuated to Goma.”⁷⁶⁶ This account can be found in the various daily reports, in particular those of the French special forces, which often mention these “extractions.” The figure given by the PCIAT’s civil affairs department shows that while the operation for Butare brought no less than a thousand people to safety - in camps in Rwanda or outside - all the other extractions and protections represented around 2,700 people over two months, or an average of just under 45 per day.

The French humanitarian project within the framework of Operation Turquoise is undoubtedly measured above all by the securing of the refugee

camps in Rwanda, which preoccupied the soldiers from the very first days of the operation, so much so that reaching these camps was a strategic political objective.⁷⁶⁷ The medicalization of the camps made it possible to provide access to health care for a population that the Turquoise force estimated at several thousand.⁷⁶⁸ It also had the major objective of stabilizing the populations, which is difficult to quantify. In fact, faced with the military advance of the RPF, the genocidal authorities pushed for a massive exodus to Zaire. This exodus was seen as a double threat, both to the stability of Rwanda and that of its neighbor, but also as a vector for the deterioration of already particularly difficult living conditions.

The humanitarian assessment is finally quantified by data concerning the expenses devoted to aid during Operation Turquoise as well as the tonnage transported and then distributed - equipment, medicine, food. This aid arrived in Goma thanks to continuous rotations, was transported by the army to Rwanda, to Kibuye and Cyangugu, and then distributed. Sometimes medicine and food are dropped by helicopter, as shown in images held by ECPA. Filmed by the same organization, the colonel in command of the Goma air base gives figures that seem to underline the scale of the aid: "In two months, we have received up to 900 tons of humanitarian cargo in a single day, in total 9,000 tons of logistical cargo loaded in Goma and 18,000 tons of humanitarian cargo."⁷⁶⁹ However, this was still insufficient in relation to the number of people to be helped and the scale of the needs. It also took time to be deployed, with a memo from General Quesnot dated 19 July emphasizing that it is "gradually being put in place but is far from corresponding to the needs."⁷⁷⁰ The figures provided by the Ministry of Cooperation or specified in memos to the President of the Republic do not isolate the period of Operation Turquoise and summarize the aid provided since April 1994. The account drawn up at the end of August puts the financial cost of the aid (excluding the Turquoise military operation) at 84.6 million francs and specifies its breakdown: emergency food aid, medical and pharmaceutical aid, accommodation and resettlement, air transport operations, road transport operations, financing granted to NGOs and

UN agencies, and the post-Turquoise support plan. The largest expenditure item is food aid, mostly delivered to the World Food Program. It is estimated at just over 13,000 tons, a relatively small amount per refugee for several months.⁷⁷¹ France was not the only country to provide aid, however, especially from the end of July when an international mobilization was launched under the aegis of the UNHCR with \$300 million, more than half of which came from the European Union. The United States also announced substantial aid, which irritated Bruno Delaye and General Quesnot, who criticized the United States in a 26 July memo for wanting to “steal the show” in the media and control all international aid.⁷⁷²

In the same memo, the Elysée’s Africa advisor and the head of the private staff wrote that, given the context described above, “the mission of the Turquoise detachment has been reoriented almost exclusively towards humanitarian aid.” Filmed at the same time during a visit to Goma, Admiral Lanxade also acknowledged that there had been a long preparatory operational phase - “a military phase [...] which took the form of fairly harsh exchanges on the ground” - but that “this period [...] is over”: “We will be able to concentrate,” he added, “on the humanitarian aspects and continue, at the same time as we gradually try to withdraw our forces in Rwanda.”⁷⁷³ For his part, General Lafourcade, filmed by ECPA shortly before the end of the operation, did not separate the military and the humanitarian:

There were not two missions, one of security and one humanitarian, staggered in time. From the beginning, we carried out a humanitarian mission, that is, when we arrived in Rwanda, we found people in distress and we immediately took care of them. So you understand, security and humanitarian aid went hand in hand [...]. But it is a whole: military-humanitarian, humanitarian-military.⁷⁷⁴

So what is the nature of Operation Turquoise and what can we conclude from this plunge into the archives?

The history of Operation Turquoise, the last French engagement in Rwanda, began before Turquoise, with France’s realization that it was necessary to intervene in the face of the massacres underway in Rwanda and the humanitarian situation. The need

to protect the population became apparent, Tutsi threatened with massacre, but also Hutu fleeing from the fighting and the advance of the RPF, which carried with it the threat, skilfully maintained by the interim government, of reprisals against all those - and there were many - who had been involved in the genocide. However, to act, even in this perspective, requires intervening in the vicinity of a civil war and directly questions the relationship that France has with what remains of the Rwandan state and with the RPF. For this reason, it seems essential to obtain an international mandate through a UN resolution.

Operation Turquoise was initially based on significant constraints and assumptions. Thus, Édouard Balladur imposed a strict limit on France's presence on Rwandan territory and opposed a project to intervene in the interior of the country, even if this limited France's capacity to act with the population. The UN mandate obliges the force to be neutral with respect to the belligerents, even if the entry into Rwanda through Zaire, in Goma and Bukavu, places the French forces on the rear of the FAR and in an ambiguous situation. The arrival of French forces on the ground made it possible to measure realities that the initial thinking had largely overlooked: the scale of the massacres and their genocidal nature - there was notably a before and after Bisesero -, the ongoing activity of genocidal groups, the very frequent involvement of administrative and political structures. At the beginning of July, the collapse of the FAR, the flight of the interim Rwandan government and the military victory of the RPF placed France in a complex situation. It needed an interlocutor with the new government in Kigali, while the RPF did not want to recognize the French presence and action in Rwanda. At the same time, the Turquoise force found itself in contact with RPF forces and in the position of having to prevent a massive exodus of Hutu populations to Zaire, in order to avoid destabilizing it and causing a humanitarian catastrophe, while the IRG was encouraging these populations to leave. The mission of the Turquoise force is therefore being transformed by force of circumstance; it seems necessary, not only to France but also to the international community, to create a safe humanitarian zone, first under French control and then under that of the UN force - UNAMIR II - when the latter is ready.

At this point, the question arises as to the mandate under which France is acting. The conceptual vagueness in the drafting of Resolution 929 contributed to the uncertainty of the positioning of the mission entrusted to France. While few UN missions fit into this configuration, it demanded a Chapter VII operation that allows the use of force and confers coercive power. However, it interprets its mandate in a restrictive manner, preferring to opt for a cautious legalism. It is true that the Turquoise force intervened in the event of a flagrant massacre, interposed itself against the militias, created a minimum of order that avoided battles between the refugees, and partially disarmed the former Rwandan armed forces. However, it did not receive specific orders to arrest those suspected of genocide, in particular members of the former interim government who were not hindered and fled to Zaire. The position of French political authorities on this issue is explored in the next chapter.

Did France put an end to the genocide, as the political authorities were quick to claim? It is true that the number of Tutsi still threatened at the end of June, who were rescued from dangerous situations, can be counted in the thousands, but France, which had been blind to the reality of the genocide for a long time, intervened too late for hundreds of thousands of others who had been exterminated during the previous two and a half months. Why did it intervene, when the international community was shying away and it was difficult to find partners? It seems that it does not want to remain inactive, but it knows more what it does not want to do - confront the RPF - than what it wants to do: save lives but also undoubtedly delay the RPF and obtain a political settlement that does not eliminate any of the Rwandan "parties," which in its eyes is a guarantee of the establishment of peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. The evolution of the situation in Rwanda, however, requires it to constantly adapt.

As a consequence of the previous question, was Operation Turquoise motivated solely by a desire to stop the massacres and respond to the humanitarian situation, and was it effective in this regard? It was mainly humanitarian, but not only, and became so strictly when, with the military victory of the RPF, there was no longer a cease-fire to be obtained or negotiations to be encouraged. The protection

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of civilian populations was effective for a small number of Tutsi and for religious communities. Humanitarian action also responded to massive food shortages and a cholera epidemic. However, when deployed in western Rwanda, where French forces arrived from Zaire, and in the context of the displacement of several hundred thousand people fleeing the RPF advance, it benefited populations that were overwhelmingly Hutu and that included not only the assassins but also the masterminds of the genocide.

Chapter 6

The Post-Turquoise Era

The meeting on 22 July, 1994 between Prime Minister Édouard Balladur, Alain Juppé, Philippe Douste-Blazy, Michel Roussin, Admiral Lanxade, Hubert Védrine, General Quesnot, Bertrand Dufourcq, and the Matignon staff had a dual purpose: to hear the report on the mission of Mr. Dufourcq, Secretary General of the Quai Orsay, and General Germanos in Kigali and “to decide on new measures in the humanitarian field in view of the scale of the disaster that has been announced.” Received by the newly appointed Rwandan Prime Minister on 18 July 1994, Bertrand Dufourcq found the meeting constructive. Three points should be noted:

Our safe humanitarian zone, its delimitation, and our stabilizing action were accepted and recognized. The rotation of our troops by UNAMIR II in three phases, as I had described to you in a previous memo, was agreed to, and the participation of French-speaking units was not objected to in principle. The formal assurance that there will be no reprisals against the Hutu population was given, as well as the acceptance of the international procedure for judging the guilty parties.¹

This high-level meeting laid the groundwork for a direct dialogue between the French authorities and the new Rwandan authorities. The decision to send the mission was made quickly: Edouard Balladur called a meeting on Tuesday, 19 July at 6:45 p.m. in which he decided to send two missions. The first was to New York “to present the planning for our withdrawal from Rwanda and the establishment of UNAMIR units, in agreement with General Dallaire,” while the second was to Kigali “to explain the conditions of our departure to General Kagame and to obtain the necessary guarantees (taking into account the populations in particular and not resuming the massacres).”²

With the dispatch of this mission, the Balladur government took note of the change of power in Kigali and intended to lay the foundations for a

discussion with the new government. It took an important political step and intended to resolve a number of problems that still existed.³ No doubt several elements were involved. First, one cannot ignore the factual situation: Kigali has been in the hands of the RPF since 4 July, a new government has just been appointed, and the old government is in disarray. There are other issues at stake. They are illuminated by Bruno Delaye's notes: "Mr. Balladur is very concerned to see this operation end quickly and with dignity for France's image," notes General Quesnot on 19 July, 1994.⁴ The Rwandan government wants active cooperation with the French government on certain specific points. This was stated by Bertrand Dufourcq, the Secretary General of the Quai d'Orsay. He reports that he "had the impression of finding a government in great disarray in the face of the magnitude of its task, anxious in terms of its image if a new exodus were to occur from our zone."⁵ While the broad outlines of an agreement on several issues have been drawn up, a certain number of unknowns remain – but which are as much political - linked to the reinforcement in men and equipment of UNAMIR II. It must also be taken into consideration that the power in Kigali is not monocephalous. The memo from Bruno Delaye and General Quesnot dated 21 July, 1994, clearly states that the "special mission for Foreign Affairs (Secretary General B. Dufourcq) and Defense (Deputy Chief of Operations of the Armed Forces General Staff, General Germanos), which left for Kigali yesterday, was able to meet with the Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs, but had not been able to meet with General Kagame, Vice President, by noon," which is a form of slap in the face. The mission entrusted by Édouard Balladur⁶ to these two men clearly specified the main interlocutor and the meaning of the mission: "to explain to General Kagame the conditions of our departure and to obtain the necessary guarantees."⁷ Is there one political line or two in Kigali? This issue is being replayed at the UN level. How can the international community be mobilized for this peace plan? While the terms of the agreement between the two governments have been established, the modalities of their implementation remain to be specified. Moreover, we must not neglect the symbolic stakes, particularly those raised by the Franco-African summit in Biarritz (7-8 November, 1994), where the subject of the invitation to Rwanda was raised.

Several questions emerge. How should the replacement of Turquoise by UNAMIR II be settled in law and in fact? Do the two parties have the same conception of what international justice should be? Finally, in the period from about 15 July to the end of 1994, did the agreement reached between the two parties exclude regional and international power play?

The sources used for this chapter are mainly diplomatic, in particular diplomatic telegrams from the DFRA in New York, as well as military sources and fonds from the Presidency of the Republic.

We will first examine the question of the succession of Turquoise and its replacement by UNAMIR, and then the question of the ICTR before addressing the question of relations between France, Rwanda and Africa in the fall/winter of 1994.

6.1. DISENGAGING: THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE TURQUOISE FORCE

In Resolution 929, the duration of Operation Turquoise was limited to two months, from 22 June to 22 August, 1994, as a relay to UNAMIR II.

6.1.1. UNAMIR II: *personnel, nationalities and resources*

The debate on the composition of UNAMIR II preceded the mission sent by the Édouard Balladur government to Kigali. Negotiations began in early July and were carefully monitored by Jean-Bernard Mérimée. Before the political agreement between France and the new Rwandan government, the negotiations stalled, which Mérimée deplored: “The international community did not show any particular eagerness to relieve us in a short time.” A first count of resources on 5 July showed the meager resources that would soon be available: 478 men, 99 military observers, and a reserve of eleven military observers in Nairobi, which is far from the contingents deployed by Turquoise. These troops would be deployed, at the request of S. Khan, the representative of the Secretary General, on either side of the

eastern border of the SHZ. The material resources were not much greater: 23 armored personnel carriers were reportedly available and 50 others were destined for the Ghanaian mainland.⁸ On 8 July, only 1,200 to 1,300 personnel were available, so requests to speed up the deployment of troops had to be repeated.⁹ The forecasts remain gloomy: optimistically, there may only be 2,800 people by the time *Turquoise* leaves on 21 August, while the UN mission may not be operational until October in the best case scenario.¹⁰ The composition of UNAMIR II is a sticking point between France and the RPF. The RPF does not want contingents from French-speaking Africa, particularly Senegal and Togo, whose forces are considered to have little respect for human rights (except as military observers),¹¹ as well as from Congo. The RPF indicated its preference for Ethiopian soldiers.¹²

The situation changed from 19-21 July, 1994, under a triple influence. First, there were increasing signs that the situation between Paris and Kigali was breaking down. Secondly, the UN took the initiative by insisting that France provide resources. On 19 July, 1994, the Secretary General suggested that France leave its equipment on lease, particularly armored vehicles, because despite the improvements, "UNAMIR could well be the victim of conflict between Hutu and Tutsi who had been resettled." On 21 July, a consultation meeting was organized with a French military delegation and representatives of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations¹³ to consider the replacement of *Turquoise* by UNAMIR and to reflect on the allocation of men and resources. While France was reluctant to leave heavy resources on the ground, General Dallaire, in the field, and the UN authorities were of a different opinion. A diplomatic telegram from the DFRA in New York, dated 21 July, 1994, states:

*The feeling of the Secretariat is that, given the level of training of the French troops, their determination, the level of their equipment and their perception by the "Hutu" population, their replacement, number for number, by less well-trained, less determined Blue Helmets, and above all, those perceived as friends of the RPF, is likely to be insufficient.*¹⁴

General Dallaire wanted significant resources: the replacement

of more than 2,000 Turquoise men by twice that number, as well as the supply of heavy weapons. He sounded the alarm and recalled that the contributing countries were accountable for human lives.¹⁵ This position was supported by other UN bodies, particularly during a meeting between the UNHCR and French and American military advisors on 17 August, 1994. The UNHCR would like French military resources to support humanitarian action after the withdrawal of Turquoise. The organization would also like to be able to use French C130s.¹⁶ Secretary General Boutros-Ghali hopes that France will equip an inter-African contingent, with the agreement of the new government in Kigali. The latter could use the equipment left by the Turquoise force. On the same day, 21 July, 1994, Chinmaya Gharekhan, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Rwanda, announced that France would leave its equipment behind when it left the SHZ.¹⁷ It was immediately denied. He was aware of the insecurity in the regions where the Hutu were very present and noted the activity of extremist movements in Kibuye and Cyangugu.

UNAMIR's deployment is difficult to plan for several reasons. The UN was waiting for supplies; in the SHZ "hostile reactions [were] foreseeable with regard to UNAMIR,"¹⁸ finally, for Gharekhan, this operation was "a logistical nightmare."¹⁹ The Rwandan government's hesitations and reversals must also be taken into account. After refusing the French-speaking African contingents, the RPF accepted the Senegalese, which it almost immediately contested, accentuating the difficulties of the transition.²⁰

France is aware of the intertwined nature of the problems. On 25 July, 1994, a diplomatic telegram issued by the DFRA in New York noted how the withdrawal of Turquoise and the deployment of UNAMIR posed both a fundamental problem in Franco-Rwandan relations and a practical problem:

Since last week, we have been the object of increasingly precise allusions concerning the need to maintain French troops as long as they have not been replaced by the Blue Helmets of UNAMIR. Until now, these were only thoughts shared with us on a bilateral basis. However, the delays in identifying the assets needed to deploy an expanded UNAMIR are such that Secretariat officials no longer hide in public that the UN needs

more time to assemble and equip its troops, and that this time frame requires France to be flexible, as Mr. Riza emphasized once again at today's meeting of troop contributors. I would add that the pressure to maintain French troops, a hypothesis that we vehemently reject every time it is mentioned, is likely to become even more pressing if it is confirmed that the RPF refuses to maintain the French-speaking African contingents within the framework of UNAMIR.²¹

In accordance with its international commitments, France, through the intermediary of Hervé Ladsous, Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, presented the plan for the withdrawal of French troops.²² In Paris, as in the SHZ, the organization of the Turquoise force's disengagement plan was meticulously prepared according to local constraints, relations with the international community, and France's desire to retain a certain number of military resources until the last moment in case the situation changed rapidly.

6.1.2 The organization and implementation of the disengagement of the Turquoise force

6.1.2.1 ORGANIZATION OF THE DISENGAGEMENT

The organization of the withdrawal of the Turquoise force was a major concern of the French authorities and the government of Edouard Balladur. The PCIAT (*Poste de Commandement Interarmées de Théâtre*) began preparing for this operation in the first half of July. This concern had multiple dimensions: on the one hand, there was a logistical issue specific to the importance of the operation. The other issue is political, even geopolitical: it is a question of gradually giving proof of French disengagement. Finally, the third issue is symbolic. The French withdrawal exposes the eastern border of Zaire. It was from the border posts of Goma and Bukavu that large numbers of people fled Rwanda. The Turquoise command feared the moment of departure, as it could mean the resumption of the exodus of these populations towards Zaire and the extension of regional instability.

In this context, a three-stage withdrawal takes place. First, there is a planning phase within PCIAT and then validation by the EMA in Paris. In order to carry out this first operation, it is necessary for

the perspectives to offer hypotheses on the evolution of Operation Turquoise and even on the French military presence in the region. There is then an implementation phase, which will involve a gradual reduction in the force's numbers and resources between the end of July and the beginning of August. Finally, the time of withdrawal, which appeared to the actors to be the most delicate, consisted of a rotation of the Turquoise forces by UNAMIR II and the end of the SHZ.

6.1.2.2 DISENGAGEMENT PLANNING

Planning for the disengagement began in the first two weeks of July 1994, while Turquoise was still in the process of building up its forces. On 14 July, the Operations Centre in Paris sent a directive to General Lafourcade asking him to prepare a disengagement plan.²³ The memo already set out the main lines of the plan. It was to be divided into three phases, the first before July, the second with the increasing importance of African battalions, and the third with a final handover to UNAMIR. On the same day, another memo to the Prime Minister raised the possibility of maintaining Turquoise if UNAMIR II did not manage to be established in time. The geopolitical risk of an influx of two to three million Rwandan refugees into Zaire was weighed.

*Given the real slowness of this reinforcement, we would most likely have to maintain beyond 21 August a minimum force composed of the EMMIR in Cyangugu and, above all, logistical support units for the Inter-African Battalion that we will have equipped and deployed, support that would be provided from Zaire.*²⁴

Two days later, in a preparatory memo, General Lafourcade stated his desire to disengage French forces by removing organic units. The aim was to organize the return of these French units pre-positioned in Africa, which made up a large part of Turquoise's strength, as quickly as possible.²⁵ The concern to keep French capabilities operational is present among the military. However, the terms of the disengagement show a desire to retain significant resources that allow for rapid response: General Lafourcade emphasizes the need

to retain a large helicopter capability for as long as possible by keeping no less than five Puma maneuver helicopters. This desire was justified by the Turquoise commander's anticipation of having to project rapidly to a point in the theater of operations.²⁶ The French military are largely dependent on the ongoing discussions at the UN regarding the composition of UNAMIR. On 18 July the logistics command of Operation Turquoise was still counting on the start of disengagement around 20-25 July and the end of the operation in early August.²⁷ Logistical issues, particularly the question of the equipment that France could leave to the UN, are still under discussion.²⁸ This hypothesis of a disengagement at the beginning of August was largely abandoned in General Lafourcade's letter to the Chief of Defense Staff on 26 July.²⁹

The disengagement objectives for the first phase were clearly symbolic.³⁰ Thus, the first departure had to concern the special operations command group, in accordance with its employment doctrine, which made it an instrument for opening up the theater and not a unit resource that had to ensure a lasting territorial presence, unlike regular units. At the same time, on 26 July, General Lafourcade proposed to the Chief of Defense Staff that most of the fighter and support air assets be withdrawn, as significant air support was no longer considered useful. The military situation had changed significantly compared to the initial situation in June. Questions remain. The first concerns the ability of UNAMIR to be deployed. General Lafourcade also questioned, on 26 July, the place of African contingents in UNAMIR II. The RPF was not in favor of this. The memo then addresses a final question that appears to be very sensitive at this time, that of keeping EMMIR outside Rwanda's borders, and therefore the need for a support detachment and, above all, a force capable of ensuring the security of this medical element.

The disengagement of the French forces from Turquoise is strategic in nature, given the importance of the operation and its political and media impact. On this occasion, the close monitoring of the operation by the highest military authorities is still evident. While the use of cargo

aircraft was being considered, it was mentioned that, in accordance with the command organization, any decision concerning the disengagement of Turquoise was the responsibility of the Operational Commander, on the proposal of the Operational Controller (COMFOR).³¹ The last disengagement updates took place in August.³²

6.1.2.3 INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DISENGAGEMENT

The departure of the troops was organized locally by setting up a disengagement unit within the PCIAT³³ in Goma, which became effective on 28 July, and an airlift was scheduled.³⁴ It was also on 28 July that the first French troops left, following a schedule that left nothing to chance. The Special Operations Command³⁵ was the first to leave. The operators of the 13th parachute regiment, on the other hand, stayed until the end to provide the command with human intelligence capabilities.³⁶ The command of the Turquoise force retained direct control over four human research teams from this regiment until the end. It was particularly keen to retain these human search capabilities for signals intelligence.³⁷ Until the last moment, those in charge of Operation Turquoise wanted to leave themselves the possibility of searching for and exploiting intelligence. The withdrawal of the air assets was planned at about the same time, on 27 July.³⁸

A number of points remain to be decided, depending on the evolution of international political relations and the decisions taken at the UN. The questions in the PCIAT memo of 31 July differ little from those of 27 July: whether or not to keep the Senegalese and other Africans, and whether or not to keep the DSL (logistical support detachment) in Goma; whether or not to keep EMMIR; and whether or not to keep a UNAMIR logistical detachment, if it is considered desirable to keep a DSL in Goma with the Liaison Detachment (DL) in Kigali.³⁹ In Paris, these questions were the subject of a memo prepared by the COIA for the Minister of Defense. The question of maintaining EMMIR in Cyangugu beyond the date of withdrawal was mentioned. However, the financial cost and the need to preserve military assets to protect it are weighed against this. General Germanos suggested

that if France wished to maintain a military humanitarian aid force, it should be redeployed to Zaire.⁴⁰ Several questions remained unanswered at the beginning of August: should a humanitarian force be maintained in the zone? How will UNAMIR take over from Turquoise?

6.1.2.4 HANDING OVER

Passing the baton to UNAMIR in order to prevent the RPF from immediately pushing the population westward and destabilizing the border zone has been a topic of discussion among French staff since the beginning of July. Thus, on 12 July, General Janvier, in charge of French operational planning, emphasized in a letter to Admiral Lanxade that the Turquoise force was faced with two scenarios regarding the rotation of forces. The first would be a rotation from the north to the south with the advance of the UN forces. The second would be a rotation from the north with that of the south, which is considered to be more difficult technically, but which is well received; it allows relieving the French forces, “placed in a politically uncomfortable situation.”⁴¹ General Janvier emphasized that the proximity to the bulk of the RPF forces in the north defined the urgency of the relief by UNAMIR. This is undoubtedly the reason for the major diplomatic effort made by France at the UN to ensure that the Secretary General obtains military contributions, particularly in terms of equipment:

I made the prescribed approach regarding the deployment of UNAMIR to the Director of Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Kofi Annan, who was surrounded by his deputy Mr. Riza and General Baril. All were very skeptical about the idea of convening a new meeting of troop contributors at this stage, believing that no new commitments could be made in this context. The main problem remained that of equipping these contingents [...] The Secretariat was discouraged by the unwillingness to provide equipment. For example, General Baril said that the Americans had refused to provide 50 additional old, armored vehicles and that South Africa had only agreed to provide 50 two-wheel drive vehicles that it no longer used, at a cost of \$50,000 each.⁴²

The integration of African forces into UNAMIR II progressed slowly. It was not until 2 August that the RPF agreed “without restriction” to the integration of African contingents from Turquoise into

UNAMIR.⁴³ Moreover, the RPF did not indicate its desire to receive material aid from France.⁴⁴ The RPF's change of heart on this issue⁴⁵ made it possible to re-launch the disengagement plan. This evolution takes several factors into account: the implementation of an operation with substantial means in a zone that risks experiencing a "power vacuum." It is also a way of pledging to the international community.⁴⁶ At the Élysée, General Quesnot wrote a memo to François Mitterrand on 13 August in which he expressed skepticism about the RPF's intentions: "It is undoubtedly in favor of an exodus of refugees from the SHZ to Zaire in order to recover an empty zone where it will be able, as in the rest of Rwanda, to proceed with a selective redistribution of land and to accuse us of having encouraged the Hutus to flee their country."⁴⁷

On 16 August, an initial handover between French troops and UNAMIR troops took place in Gikongoro and Kibuye without a hitch.⁴⁸ The French troops reported on the mood of the people on the ground in the SHZ: "The population is nevertheless worried about the prospect of our departure and the eventual takeover of the SHZ by the RPF, which public rumor has it is responsible for numerous abuses and even massacres in the area it controls."⁴⁹ The French troops reported this to their superiors.

The end of Operation Turquoise and the transformation of the remaining elements into means of support for the NGOs present in Goma were marked by a number of changes. A new Operation Commander⁵⁰ was appointed and the designated officer was Colonel Le Flem, who had been the Chief of Staff of Operation Turquoise and General Lafourcade. The operation was no longer called Turquoise, but rather French elements in Zaire. In the instructions he received from the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Admiral Lanxade, his mission was specified. Operation Turquoise in Rwanda was over: "Unless you receive a special counter-order from the Chief of Defense Staff, you are not authorized to go to Rwanda under any circumstances, nor is anyone under your command."⁵¹ The departure of French forces from Rwanda and the withdrawal of some units to Zaire created a new strategic situation in this part of Africa.

6.1.3 France and the Zairian issue (July-August 1994)

Zaire played a crucial role in French policy in Central and East Africa, and more particularly with regard to Rwanda, first by authorizing French planes to fly over its territory as part of Operation Amaryllis and then by welcoming French troops on its soil in Goma and Bukavu. This role assigned to Zaire by France was however criticized by an astute analyst, Jean-François Bayart, author of the report on “L’engrenage Rwandais” (The Rwandan spiral) in October 1990. In an interview with *Croissance* magazine in June 1994, when asked about the consequences of “such an influx of refugees in the Great Lakes region,” he gave his conclusions:

The general implosion of the region, the development of a complex structure of conflicts on a regional scale.

The next link is Burundi, where the situation is becoming more and more worrying. I must add that France, which is never behind in its responsibility for this kind of slip, has a truly criminal attitude in reintroducing Field Marshal Mobutu into the regional power play. The Kivu region of Zaire is a real powder keg. By legitimizing Zaire’s political and military intervention in the Rwandan war, we are encouraging the extension of the conflict to Kivu. To encourage Mobutu to intervene, a Mobutu who has been sponsoring a process of ethnic cleansing in the Shaba region for two years, is to invite the chief arsonist to the fire [...].

To the question “What can be done today in Rwanda?” he answers: “I am in such a state of consternation that I really don’t know. I do know, however, what not to do: to reintroduce Mobutu into the regional game and reconstitute him as a legitimate actor in Kinshasa.”⁵²

The French position from about 13-17 July 1994 onwards takes note of several factors, one of the main ones being the international refugee issue. On 13 July 1994, Jean-Marc de La Sablière indicated the line to be followed to the French ambassador in Kinshasa, who was due to have a meeting with Field Marshal Mobutu. After thanking him for “the spirit of cooperation shown by Zaire, which greatly facilitated the implementation of Operation Turquoise,” he indicated that the SHZ had made it possible to “stabilize the populations and prevent them from fleeing to Zaire and Burundi.” He warned that it was essential that the end of the crisis not carry the seeds of an armed resistance

backed by Zaire.⁵³ His message was reinforced by a diplomatic telegram from the cabinet sent to the French diplomatic service in Goma a few days later, on 17 July 1994, which once again stressed the issue of refugees:

*The Department shares your concern about the concentration of international aid for Rwandan refugees in Zaire, even though the populations present in the SHZ are ever more numerous and their needs are not being met. On Monday, the Department will bring the matter to the attention of the United Nations and the main UN agencies, drawing attention to the danger of massive aid to Goma that would encourage people to reach Zaire rather than stabilize them on Rwandan territory. Today, you could share our analysis with journalists in Goma, reminding them that the safe humanitarian zone is home to 1.6 million displaced people (compared to the 800,000 refugees in Goma), who need assistance in order to remain in Rwanda.*⁵⁴

The memo for the Minister's office dated 13 August, 1994, is much more alarmist: "The risk, which we cannot neglect, of a massive exodus of people from the SHZ, upon the departure of our forces on 21 August or in the days that will follow, must be weighed. Such a phenomenon would erase the positive effects of Operation Turquoise."⁵⁵

François Descoueytes, the French ambassador to Uganda, recalled, at the end of April 1994, the profoundly destabilizing role, sociologically and geopolitically, of refugee flows:

*To be understood, the problem of Uganda-Rwanda relations must be placed in a broader historical and geographical context. In a region where human groups are intermingled and mobile, where the borders born of colonization are even more artificial than in other parts of Africa, where exchange networks cross national groups to which the notion of "field" is superimposed, the key word in bilateral issues is ultimately interdependence. Every social shock is felt throughout the region through the refugees, whom multiple solidarities push countries and human groups, even though they are among the poorest on the planet, to nevertheless welcome, but within the limits of their means, which are quickly reached for lack of being international. There is therefore less a Ugandan-Rwandan problem than a problem of regional stability and economic development on a viable scale. I will come back to this last point in a future correspondence.*⁵⁶

Did Operation Turquoise act as a deterrent to the RPF by cutting off its route to Zaire? The documentation

does not allow us to answer this question. However, French forces were called upon by Zaire. Thus, C. Boivineau noted on 10 August that the Zairian Prime Minister had requested an air transfer of Zairian paratroopers to the interior of Zaire: "The request [...] arouses great reservations on our part: the operation is large-scale (500 men), the conditions of this transfer are not clear, the destination, Shaba, raises a problem insofar as, if the persons concerned were to create disturbances there, our responsibility would not fail to be denounced. Furthermore, nothing is said about the possible rotation of these troops. Under these conditions, the Department does not consider it appropriate to respond favorably to the request."⁵⁷ A few days later, the situation changed since C. Boivineau stated: "The Department informs you that the question of the transport by the French forces, or with their help, of a battalion of the 31st Zairian parachute brigade from Goma to Shaba⁵⁸ is being discussed locally in Goma."⁵⁹

The French military disengagement from Rwanda and its replacement by UNAMIR went well. The foundations were laid politically. Implementation by the UN and France required flexibility on the French side and certainly on the Rwandan side the acceptance of modifying its will (notably the presence of African troops). The Tutsi genocide, the massive presence of refugees, the disorganization of the SHZ through the disappearance of territorial executives and the departure of French troops created a point of instability at the Rwandan-Zairian border that worried France. However, at the UN, there was another issue that attracted the attention of diplomats: the question of the ICTR.

6.2. JUDGING THE GENOCIDE: FRANCE AND THE ICTR

As early as May 1994, a report by the Secretary General referred to the possibility of prosecuting the perpetrators of acts of genocide and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.⁶⁰ On 8 July, the special rapporteur appointed by the Commission on Human Rights, René Degni-Ségui, identified genocide against the Tutsi and concluded, among other things, that an ad hoc international jurisdiction should be created or that the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia should be extended.⁶¹ This very close precedent is in everyone's mind. Adopted in 1993,

Article 4 of the Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia⁶² incorporated Articles 2 and 3 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 9 December 1948. Article 4 lists the acts that constitute genocide if committed with “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such.” These acts include killing members of the group and causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group. Article 4 also covers conspiracy, incitement to commit genocide, as well as attempted genocide and complicity in genocide.

As France participated directly in the drafting of this statute, its experience is decisive in the consideration of the trial of those allegedly responsible for the genocide in Rwanda. This issue is being followed very closely by the French authorities.

6.2.1 The prospect of an international tribunal

6.2.1.1 FRANCE’S SUPPORT

Although the archives contain a few isolated signs of reluctance to create an international tribunal, the government’s support for this project was expressed early and consistently.

During the discussion of Resolution 918, which was to strengthen UNAMIR and establish an arms embargo, Nigeria suggested that the Secretary-General be asked to submit “a report on the international prosecution of perpetrators of genocide or other serious violations of international humanitarian law.”⁶³ France’s Permanent Representative, Jean-Bernard Mérimée, observes that in the absence of an International Criminal Court, such an objective would force the Secretary General to invite the Council to consider “setting up a specialized jurisdiction similar to the one that exists for the former Yugoslavia.”⁶⁴ The prospect hardly seems to suit Mérimée, since such a jurisdiction is by nature very costly. “Under these conditions,” he concluded, “one might wonder whether it would not be preferable to abandon this provision altogether.”⁶⁵

Three months later, while Operation Turquoise was underway, the punishment of the *genocidaires* did not seem to be at the forefront

of another French representative's concerns either. To a member of the American government who expressed his wish for the rapid creation of an international tribunal, the French embassy in the United States replied, "without contradicting him," by emphasizing "our legal and practical concerns, insisting on the need to do nothing that would dissuade refugees from returning to Rwanda."⁶⁶

Despite these expressions of reluctance, there were strong statements calling for those responsible for the "massacres" to be brought to justice, although their identity was hardly specified. On 8 June, during the vote on Resolution 925, which finally explicitly recognized the genocide, the French Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations declared that "the continuation of the massacres and of what has no other name than genocide is intolerable and those responsible must be judged."⁶⁷ On 29 July, the Permanent Representation in New York was informed that "the Department hopes that an international criminal tribunal for Rwanda will be set up quickly, and will effectively arrest, judge and condemn those responsible for the massacres."⁶⁸ This position was also expressed by Alain Juppé in his speech to the UN on 20 September, 1994:

Justice must also be carried out quickly but calmly with regard to those responsible for the massacres. In this respect, we are in favor of the creation of an international tribunal based on Chapter VII, with its own judges and statute, but based on the structures of the tribunal created for Yugoslavia.⁶⁹

Before examining the discussions that will lead to the creation of such a tribunal, it is appropriate to consider two types of measures that could be taken in this perspective.

6.2.1.2 GATHERING INFORMATION

As early as 13 May, 1994, when the future Resolution 918 on the strengthening of UNAMIR was being discussed, which would request the Secretary-General to investigate serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in Rwanda, the Department considered that "the mandate of UNAMIR could include a provision enabling it to provide support for the collection of information" on the subject.⁷⁰ On 1 July Resolution 935 asked states to compile and

communicate to the commission of experts the information they had collected concerning such violations of international humanitarian law and in particular of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.⁷¹ France, which is present on the ground as part of Operation Turquoise, has indicated on several occasions that it will take action in this regard.⁷² On 18 July General Lafourcade passed on the government's instructions: "I ask you to send me, by Monday, 25 July, the information you have been able to gather on the facts that have been observed (existence of mass graves, people threatened, activities of militias or others, actions of local authorities)."⁷³

At the end of July, the new government in Kigali seemed to be pleased with the "promise made by the French to communicate to the commission of inquiry any testimonies on the massacres that could be collected."⁷⁴ A week later, the Department confirmed that this information was "available to the UN investigators."⁷⁵ In mid-August, following the request of the RPF representative to the UN, the Department informed Jean-Bernard Mérimée that it would send him,

*via the next diplomatic pouch, the information collected by France for transmission to the committee of experts created by Resolution 935. In order to make this transmission official, the Department would be grateful if you would send it, upon receipt, to the Secretary General of the United Nations with a covering letter, emphasizing that it is information and testimony collected in the context of Operation Turquoise, but whose veracity the French troops - whose mission it was not - were unable to verify and that in no case do these documents have probative value.*⁷⁶

The promise made to the RPF was therefore kept: France did communicate to the UN the testimonies relating to "the massacres." It had simply failed to specify that, while the majority of these documents concern the genocide against the Tutsi,⁷⁷ a large part of them concern massacres attributed to the RPF.⁷⁸

6.2.1.3 The refusal to arrest suspects

While France was happy to gather testimony, it categorically refused to arrest those suspected of the worst atrocities. As General Germanos explained during a crisis unit meeting on 7 July, "we can provide information and [illegible] note

the assassins, but not arrest people.”⁷⁹ On 14 July, General Lafourcade informed the general staff of the presence of members of the interim government in the SHZ, and regretted the absence of a clear directive:

*The most delicate problem to solve remains that of the Interim Government. This evening I learned that part of the interim government had taken refuge in Cyangugu (including the president). I am trying to clarify the information. It is regrettable that this sensitive situation, which had been the subject of a request for action from me and the ambassador, was not taken into account in time by our diplomacy. I am now waiting for orders, but the Turquoise force will have one more problem to solve.*⁸⁰

On the morning of 15 July, France was not yet in a position to confirm to the Security Council that former ministers were in the SHZ,⁸¹ but the information reached it in the afternoon and the Deputy Permanent Representative of France immediately informed the Council:

Mr. President,

*By order of my government, I have the honor to inform you of the following. The presence of the “president” of the “interim government” of Rwanda and four of his “ministers” has been noted in Cyangugu in the Safe Humanitarian Zone of southwestern Rwanda. The French authorities have made it officially known that they will not tolerate any political or military activity in this safe zone, which is strictly humanitarian in nature, and that they will take all measures to ensure that the rules applicable in this zone are respected. The French authorities stand ready to assist in any decision of the Security Council concerning the persons in question. They are at the disposal of the United Nations to examine with them the decisions to which they might wish France to lend its support.*⁸²

By 15 July at the latest, France was therefore aware that members of the interim government were in “its” zone. A DGSE memo of 20 July 1994 indicates the precise location of members of the former interim government and reports that some of them, including Jean Kambanda and Augustin Bizimana, “are sometimes in the Safe Humanitarian Zone during the day and return to Bukavu [in Zaire] in the evening, where they remain in their places of residence without leaving.”⁸³ Later, another report that was widely circulated to the Élysée and the government stated that “most of the former Presidential Guard (PG) had taken refuge in the Safe Humanitarian Zone (SHZ).”⁸⁴

Those responsible for the genocide were not, however, apprehended

by the French forces. On 15 July, Prime Minister Balladur declared that if members of the interim government “come to us and we are informed, we will intern them [...] We will not arrest them. [...] We will not put them in prison altogether, but under the custody of French soldiers in order to prevent them from continuing their activities and to hand them over to the United Nations if we are asked to do so.”

The Elysée’s disagreement is indicated in the margin of this document by Hubert Védrine: “The President’s reading. This is not what was said by the Prime Minister.”⁸⁵ Indeed, the archives show that the French authorities never seriously considered making arrests, despite the strong appeals made from Goma by Ambassador Yannick Gérard. Instead, they tried to convince members of the interim government to leave the Safe Humanitarian Zone.

On 14 July, France informed members of the interim government that their presence was “not desirable” in the Safe Humanitarian Zone.⁸⁶ The next day, Ambassador Gérard, the Quai d’Orsay’s envoy in Goma, relayed General Lafourcade’s questions: since these individuals were already there, how could this position be implemented? Yannick Gérard proposes to go to Cyangugu to insist on France’s message to the senior officials of the former Rwandan government. “But this message must be credible,” he adds, “that is to say, accompanied by effective measures such as at least placing the persons concerned under house arrest, if not arrested.”⁸⁷ In the next message, the ambassador informed the Department of the plans to reconstitute the interim government in Cyangugu. He defended a position of principle:

*I believe that our reaction to this new situation must be perfectly clear, public and transparent. Since we consider their presence in the safe humanitarian zone to be undesirable, and since we know that the authorities bear a heavy responsibility for the genocide, we have no choice, whatever the difficulties, but to arrest them or put them under immediate house arrest while awaiting a decision on their case by the competent international judicial bodies.*⁸⁸

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs then issued a communiqué stating that no political or military activity would be tolerated in the Safe Humanitarian Zone, and announcing that the United Nations had been informed

of the location of the members of the interim government. France “stands ready to assist in any UN decision concerning them.”⁸⁹ In the wake of this, the Department simply asked Ambassador Gérard to make indirect contact with the interim government. While “the international community in New York is in the process of defining the attitude to be adopted towards them,” it tells him to

*use all indirect channels and in particular your African contacts, by not exposing yourself directly, in order to convey to these authorities our wish that they leave the safe humanitarian zone. You will emphasize that the international community and in particular the United Nations should determine very soon the conduct towards these so-called authorities.*⁹⁰

In response, Yannick Gérard expressed strong personal opposition:

*Our position is now public and perfectly clear. I no longer see the need to go and indirectly warn the targeted persons. Various statements apparently from authorized French sources suggest that these members of the “interim government” are under house arrest. Some journalists here deduce from our 15 July communiqué (“It is already referring them to the United Nations and is ready to assist in any UN decision concerning them”) that we would therefore now oppose their possible escape from the Safe Humanitarian Zone. I would be grateful if you could tell me whether this interpretation is correct. For my part, I continue to believe that these members of the interim government are indeed among the main perpetrators of the genocide and that our duty now is not to let them go free. This opinion, of course, is my own, but I would like to see it recorded in the file of this case, given the mission with which the Department has entrusted me.*⁹¹

This appeal does not convince his hierarchy:

*For your strictly personal information, in accordance with our statement of 15 July and our correspondence to the President of the Security Council, our forces are instructed to ensure that the rules applicable in the safe zone are respected and therefore to prohibit any political or military activity there. As we said on 14 July, the members of the Interim Government know that their presence in the safe area is “not desirable” or wanted. Presumably, they will take this into account.*⁹²

Ambassador Gérard’s proposals therefore did not meet with

the approval of the Department. The position of the Quai d'Orsay was clearly expressed on 15 July, in response to questions from the Prime Minister. The Safe Humanitarian Zone could not serve as a refuge for members of the interim government, but it was out of the question to detain them. They must therefore be made to leave quickly, before a new government in Kigali demands their arrest. An unsigned memo found in the diplomatic archives makes this clear:

If, as is likely, some members of the government are already present in the area, it is desirable to get them out as soon as possible: their presence will not be hidden for long; we will not have the possibility of handing them over to the United Nations, which at this stage has only set up a commission of inquiry into the genocide, with no police-type powers of constraint. There is also a risk that, as soon as a new government is formed by the RPF, we will be asked to hand them over to the new authorities. It would be better to prevent this risk by having those concerned leave, which would also dissuade others from joining the safe zone.⁹³

On 17 July, in the minutes of a crisis unit that he sent to the Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, technical advisor in the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, expressed a certain amount of concern: "The 'interim government' has made public statements announcing that it would remain in Rwanda to carry out political action despite our position." But other messages transmitted to the Turquoise forces assure that the ministers have committed themselves to returning to Zaire within forty-eight hours. The urgency of this departure is underlined with the greatest clarity:

The difficulty is that, if the new government is formed in Kigali, one of its first demands could be the handing over of the members of the "interim government." It is very important that they have already left our area by that time, because if they have not, we cannot justify not arresting them or letting them go. The attention of the Minister of Defense is strongly drawn to the importance of pushing the 'interim government' to leave the zone as soon as possible.⁹⁴

This document is extremely clear: the various arguments raised for refusing to arrest the members of the interim government seem to be primarily means of justifying to the outside world a reluctance in principle. There are three such arguments. First, France explains that the arrest of the suspects is not

within its mandate and should be entrusted to UNAMIR. Second, France refuses to extend its mandate. Finally, it slowed down the assignment of this mission to UNAMIR.

The refusal to intervene is presented first of all as strict compliance with the mandate entrusted to Operation Turquoise. As the Department explained on 14 July, 1994, “as regards the attitude to be adopted in Rwanda towards persons suspected of being the perpetrators of massacres and human rights violations (identification, apprehension, detention), the current mandate granted by the Security Council to the French forces does not allow us to act.”⁹⁵ Hubert Colin de Verdière, head of the Directorate for the United Nations and International Organizations, agreed the next day: “France is acting in the area on behalf of the international community. It is up to the latter to define the conduct to be adopted vis-à-vis the Gisenyi authorities.”⁹⁶ On 16 July, he reminded Yannick Gérard that the arrest of persons suspected of being responsible for the genocide did not fall within France’s mandate:

*We are, as we repeated yesterday, ready to assist in any decisions taken by the United Nations with regard to these people. But our mandate does not authorize us to arrest them on our own authority, and it is not conceivable that we would have to do so. Indeed, given the mandate entrusted to us and the strictly humanitarian nature of our mission, such a task, due to the surrounding environment, could lead us to depart from our neutrality, which is the best guarantee of our effectiveness.*⁹⁷

However, the Quai d’Orsay is also able to take a broader view of the mandate of the Turquoise force. After having used the argument of the mandate to refuse to disarm the Rwandan Armed Forces, France chose to take on this task.⁹⁸ An unsigned memo also considers that pushing members of the interim government out of the Safe Humanitarian Zone “is not incompatible with our mandate: the presence of these people in the safe zone distorts the humanitarian concept of the zone and, in the near future, poses serious risks to the population, which we would no longer be able to protect.”⁹⁹

In any case, the restrictive nature of the mandate given by the United Nations seemed to suit France very well, since it rejected the American proposal to broaden it in order to authorize

the Turquoise forces to seize those presumed responsible for the genocide. On the morning of 16 July, J.-B. Mérimée informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that “our American colleagues informed us at the end of the council that they would be ready to support us in the adoption of a resolution broadening the mandate of the multinational force to allow it to arrest and detain criminals.” In Bruno Delaye’s archives, this passage is circled in red and marked with an exclamation point.¹⁰⁰ Hubert Colin de Verdière immediately informed Yannick Gérard of the Department’s opposition: “The suggestion by American diplomats that a Security Council resolution should extend the mandate of the Turquoise forces to this end does not seem to us to be worth exploring.”¹⁰¹ The minutes of the crisis unit held at the Quai d’Orsay on 16 July clearly express this position:

“We cannot [...] turn ourselves into police in our zone. We are not in favor of extending our mandate to the arrest of those responsible for the massacres.”¹⁰² In a memo addressed to the President of the Republic on 18 July Bruno Delaye and General Quesnot pointed out that “Mr. Balladur excludes our forces from carrying out police work in the humanitarian zone in order to hand over presumed criminals to the RPF.”¹⁰³

The same day, the French ambassador in Washington reported, however, that “the American administration has told us that it is working on a draft UN resolution calling for the detention of persons who could reasonably be considered to be involved in the responsibility for the massacres, in Rwanda but also in neighboring countries.”¹⁰⁴ The next day, the French representation at the UN reported that “Washington still insists on the adoption” of such a resolution.¹⁰⁵

On 20 July, a meeting at the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs as well as a new telegram from Hubert Colin de Verdière addressed to New York and Washington, diplomatically affirming that France was not “against examining such a question,” made its refusal clear. Three arguments were put forward. First, “it seems extremely difficult” to make such arrests as long as the Commission of Inquiry created by Resolution 935 has not delivered its report and a competent international jurisdiction has not been created.¹⁰⁶

Secondly, “we have no reason to wish for an extension of our mandate when we are already preparing to leave.”¹⁰⁷ Finally, there is little precedent for entrusting such a mission to a peacekeeping force. The Department of African and Malagasy Affairs states that this has never been done,¹⁰⁸ while H. Colin de Verdière recalls the Somali fiasco: “The only precedent for a peacekeeping force with a mandate to arrest criminals is that of UNOSOM, which was given a mission of this type in Mogadishu by Resolution 837: the experience was not conclusive, and we believe that lessons should be learned from it.”¹⁰⁹

In order to rule out such a mission, France also points out on occasion that only UNAMIR could make arrests. Yannick Gérard emphasized this at the beginning of July, but insisted on the assistance that France should provide:

*If our obvious interest is to stay away from such an operation, it would be desirable, it seems to me, and urgent, to have this mandate entrusted to UNAMIR I or possibly to UNAMIR II since the latter's mission will necessarily have to be updated in relation to the former. It seems to me that it is up to us to clearly demonstrate that Operation Turquoise did not come to protect the guilty and that, on the contrary, we are doing everything possible to ensure that they are effectively brought to justice.*¹¹⁰

Two days later, he added that those responsible, whose “hands are all covered in blood [...] must, when the time comes, and as quickly as possible, be arrested by UNAMIR, which should receive a mandate to do so, in order to be brought to justice. It will be up to us to facilitate the work of the UNAMIR according to the modalities to come.”¹¹¹

Dominique de Villepin used a blunt expression during the crisis unit of 13 July: “We must pass the baby on to others”¹¹² In his telegram of 16 July, H. Colin de Verdière insisted on this point: “If arrests at the level in question were to be made, it would be up to forces directly under the UN Secretariat General to carry them out.”¹¹³ Nevertheless, while UNAMIR was invoked to relieve the Turquoise forces, France did not do much to ensure that the mission of arresting the presumed perpetrators was really entrusted to the Blue Helmets. On 20 July, the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs “doubted that UNAMIR could receive

such a mandate when the competent tribunal had not yet been created.”¹¹⁴ Two weeks later, while the Americans insisted that “states with forces in the region,” i.e. France and the United Nations, should be responsible for arresting the suspects in order to avoid “important perpetrators of the massacres [disappearing] into thin air,” France’s reluctance took the form of a protection of the rights of the defense, which also concerned any arrest made by UNAMIR.

*To whom would the suspects be handed over, given that the Rwandan authorities would have good arguments to support their jurisdiction to prosecute them and given the recent statements by the Kigali authorities on the nature of the upcoming trials? What safeguards would be attached to the detention, which, in principle, should not be allowed to extend beyond a few days outside of judicial review? Who would assess, and according to what criteria, the reasonableness of suspicions about a particular person? What would be done with the detained persons if the creation of the court in charge of judging them was delayed? Who would determine the conditions of detention in the absence of rules of procedure for the new court? Would UNAMIR forces be willing to take on such a task?*¹¹⁵

Five days later, the Americans returned to the attack without convincing the French. The United States, explains J.-B. Mérimée, insisted on the need to

*Make sure criminal individuals did not become untraceable. On the other hand, the Americans appeared to be more indifferent to observations concerning the conditions in which prisoners would be incarcerated. For them, it would be sufficient to provide, in a Chapter VII resolution, for visits to the detainees by the Red Cross and to mention the temporary nature of the detention. Given the exceptional nature of the situation, the fact that the detainees could not defend themselves or be brought before a judge for several weeks or months did not seem to them to be a major obstacle. The American forces would in any case be willing to carry out this “selection” of suspects. Mistakes would be made, and innocent people would be incarcerated, but that was the price to be paid.*¹¹⁶

This concern for the rights of the defense is very honorable, but the succession of arguments invoked reveals France’s lack of eagerness to arrest genocide suspects, even if they do not comply with France’s wish to see them leave the Safe Humanitarian Zone. Moreover, the members of the interim government are aware that

they have nothing to fear from France: as the end of Operation Turquoise approaches, the DGSE reports that several former Rwandan ministers wish to move away from Kivu: “Indeed, the departure of Operation Turquoise forces, particularly those deployed in the Safe Humanitarian Zone, poses a serious security problem for the collaborators of the former Rwandan government.”¹¹⁷

6.2.2 DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN FRANCE AND RWANDA DURING THE CREATION OF THE TRIBUNAL

A complete history of the creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda would have to analyze the divergent positions of Security Council members on a number of issues. Should the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia be extended, for example, or should a new ad hoc tribunal be created?¹¹⁸ For our part, we will focus solely on the issues of friction between Rwanda and certain other representations, with France at the forefront. Paris is heavily involved in the negotiations on the creation of the International Criminal Tribunal. It defends positions that are sometimes shared by most other delegations, sometimes isolated, but almost always opposed to those of Rwanda.

6.2.2.1 FRANCE AND THE CREATION OF THE TRIBUNAL: INVESTING IN IMAGE AND CONTROL

France is aware that its attitude towards the creation of the tribunal is being closely scrutinized. When, at the end of September, the Americans presented a project, Jean-Bernard Mérimée was aware of the budgetary difficulties associated with a new jurisdiction and feared that the UN would repeat the mistake it had made in financing the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.¹¹⁹ He added, however, that:

If we were to obstruct the creation of this body by means of budgetary objections, this would not fail to be interpreted as a sly manifestation of France’s partiality in this matter. We would be suspected of having accepted the creation of a tribunal at the political level

*by making the calculation of blocking it at the stage of budgetary negotiation. We would then lose all the political advantage of the contribution we have made so far to efforts to punish the perpetrators of genocide.*¹²⁰

New Zealand and the United States were the first to take the lead in designing the future tribunal. But on 26 October, while the discussions were going well, Mérimée suggested that France should be more closely associated with the drafting work, for two reasons expressed with the greatest clarity:

Finally, I note that the United Kingdom has been on the list of co-authors of the documents since 16 October, along with the United States and New Zealand. Seen from New York, it would seem eminently desirable that we should also be able to join this list tomorrow, i.e. before the discussions in the informal meeting on Thursday. This would have two main advantages:

A greater say in the text and to be able to counter possible unreasonable demands for amendments more effectively.

*It would make it clear that we were closely involved in the drafting of the text (as we were in the drafting of the text for the former Yugoslavia) and therefore that the allegations made by some Rwandan representatives that we were putting obstacles in the way of the adoption of the statutes are strictly unfounded.*¹²¹

This strategy paid off. The day after the adoption of the resolution creating the tribunal, in response to the French ambassador to the United States who questioned the advisability of joining a group of “friends of Rwanda” intended to coordinate aid for the reconstruction of the country,¹²² Mérimée observed that

*it is desirable, seen from New York, that France be part of it, at least for preventive reasons. Our participation in such a group would in fact prevent the adoption of positions or decisions that could embarrass us. This was the case recently during the discussions on the creation of the International Criminal Tribunal: our status as co-author of the text enabled us to assert our positions and prevent the adoption of provisions that would have posed a problem for us.*¹²³

During the negotiations for the creation of the tribunal, France had in fact succeeded most of the time in setting aside the wishes of the Rwandan government, expressed by a brand new representative, Manzi Bakuramutsa, whose appointment was announced on 1 August and who took office at the end of the same month.¹²⁴

6.2.2.2 MISUNDERSTANDING OF INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE AND ISOLATION OF RWANDA

From the outset, Rwanda's position towards a future international tribunal was marked by ambiguity and even incomprehension. At the end of July, the Department reported that "the Rwandan government accepts the idea of setting up an international criminal tribunal to judge those responsible for the massacres but reserves the right to identify the said criminals,"¹²⁵ which is somewhat contradictory.

When President Bizimungu spoke to the United Nations on 6 October, he clearly stated that "it is more than urgent to set up the international tribunal to judge those responsible for the genocide in all transparency."¹²⁶ But on 18 October, there was a change of heart. The Rwandan representatives explained that they had not understood "all that was involved in the creation of an international tribunal. They had expected international support for the creation of a Rwandan body that could contribute to the restoration of confidence and the rule of law in that country."¹²⁷ The Permanent Representative of Rwanda invoked a misunderstanding of the legal issues and told the Council members the fable of the ant and the elephant: "The ant had asked the elephant for water to help him dig his tunnels and the elephant's abundant helpfulness, far from helping him, had resulted in the flooding of the anthill."¹²⁸ Rwanda therefore requested a number of changes to the draft statute of the international tribunal.

Some of these demands were rejected by the vast majority of the other delegations, on the grounds that they showed a lack of understanding of the functioning of an international court. This is the case, for example, with regard to the headquarters of the tribunal, which the Rwandans would like to see installed in Kigali, as was already demonstrated in the speech by President Bizimungu on 6 October¹²⁹ and again by the permanent representative at the end of the same month.¹³⁰ The prospect of locating the tribunal in Kigali is a major concern. On the other hand, the prospect of locating the tribunal in Africa does not seem to meet with hostility within the Council.¹³¹

Among the demands of 18 October was the consultation of the Rwandan government before any decision was taken on the execution of sentences, pardons or commutation of sentences. For France,

such a mechanism cannot be accepted. First, it is contrary to the independence of the international tribunal. Secondly, it would risk leading the states of the former Yugoslavia to demand a similar modification of the statute of “their” International Criminal Tribunal.¹³² As a result, the Americans undertook to “draft and ‘submit to the Rwandans’ (in their words) a new draft that would not have the effect of giving the government of Rwanda a permanent say in the execution of sentences.”¹³³

On 26 October, Rwanda initially appeared to acknowledge that its demands were incompatible with the international nature of the tribunal.¹³⁴ However, just as the draft was to be adopted on 29 October, the permanent representative expressed Kigali’s opposition. According to the summary of his remarks sent by Mérimée, “the sentences should be executed only in Rwanda and under the control of the Rwandan authorities, with Rwandan law applying to any commutation or pardon measures.”¹³⁵ Rwanda also regrets the absence of the death penalty as well as the material jurisdiction of the tribunal which includes crimes against humanity and war crimes, instead of focusing on genocide. It would also like to be consulted on the appointment of judges “in order to avoid maneuvers to appoint judges from states involved in the conflict in one way or another.”¹³⁶ The permanent representative of Rwanda concluded “by indicating that it was a mistake to try to adapt the case of the Yugoslavia Tribunal instead of building an entity of a new nature.”¹³⁷

Jean-Bernard Mérimée reports the firmness with which the Rwandan opposition was received: “The members of the Council generally let Rwanda know that it had the choice of accepting the statute or appearing to have refused the creation of an international jurisdiction and to bear the political consequences.” Diplomatically, the United Kingdom assures that “the Rwandan position is based on certain misunderstandings and invites Mr. Manzi Bakuramutsa to reassure his authorities. Pedagogical, New Zealand explains again that “an international tribunal cannot be a Rwandan tribunal, and cannot be placed under the control of the Rwandan government.” More firmly, France indicated that

between an international jurisdiction and national courts, there was

*no intermediate formula. While the Council was entitled to act on the basis of Chapter VII to create an international judicial body in an emergency situation, this was not the case when formulas akin to judicial cooperation or financial or technical assistance were being considered. In the latter case, the competence was rather in the hands of the General Assembly or of bilateral cooperation.*¹³⁸

The adoption of the statute of the tribunal was therefore postponed for a few days, and in the meantime a delegation from the United Nations legal service was sent to Kigali “in order to explain to the Rwandan authorities exactly what an international jurisdiction represents.”¹³⁹ This mission, entrusted to Hans Corell, ended in failure.¹⁴⁰ It thus appears that, on a certain number of issues, France joined the chorus of other delegations in rejecting the Rwandan claims. But this is not always the case.

6.2.2.3 TERRITORIAL JURISDICTION, TEMPORAL JURISDICTION AND THE ISOLATION OF FRANCE

France appears more isolated on two issues. It had to make a concession but obtained a compromise that satisfied it at the end of the main battle.

Among the changes proposed by Rwanda on 18 October was an expansion of the territorial jurisdiction of the tribunal, which should also be able to deal with crimes committed by Rwandans on the territory of neighboring states. France does not seem to be pleased with this prospect, but it is joined only by China and Spain in asking for a period of reflection. The United States immediately agreed, on the grounds that national criminal courts often have jurisdiction over offences committed abroad by nationals of their state. The argument did not convince Mérimée: “This transposition makes little sense in this case, since the jurisdiction created is not a Rwandan court but an international body whose only rule of jurisdiction is that laid down in the founding text.”¹⁴¹ But he was told from Paris to give in on this point: “We are willing to accept the extension of jurisdiction to the territories of neighboring countries provided, as you suggested, that this modification does not raise any formal objection from any of the States concerned.”¹⁴²

French resistance was much more fierce on the question of temporal jurisdiction. This problem was undoubtedly the most debated throughout the drafting of the statute of the future tribunal. This jurisdiction was immediately addressed at the end of September, during the first discussions between the Secretary General and the permanent members of the Security Council. The United States proposed that the tribunal should have jurisdiction over acts committed on or after 1 April 1994. The British were in favor of 1 January to include preparations for the genocide, which appealed to the Secretary-General, who hesitated between these two proposals. China, on the other hand, suggested a later date to include acts of genocide which, in its view, targeted both Tutsi and Hutu, as this solution would be likely to promote national reconciliation.¹⁴³ The draft prepared by New Zealand and the United States retained the date of 1 January, and for this reason was opposed by France. Jean-Bernard Mérimée denounced the politicization of a judicial issue, arguing that the inclusion of the first four months of 1994 would lead to the questioning of the Rwandan government's policies rather than the massacres. The interest of such a timeline is very weak, since the circumstances that preceded the crimes could in any case be evoked during the trials of their perpetrators. But France's opposition was hardly echoed: only Brazil supported it. Mérimée was aware that France risked being accused of partiality, and he half-heartedly acknowledged that such a reproach would not be entirely unfounded: "The risk of the Habyarimana regime being put on trial and of France being implicated is obvious, but it seems impossible at this stage to counter it by simple persuasion."¹⁴⁴

The 1 January date thus seemed to be a given. Nevertheless, Rwanda's unexpected opposition on 18 October reopened the debate. Rwanda, with the support of the United States, wanted to go back to 1 October 1993, citing the calls for genocide broadcast on RTLM¹⁴⁵ on that date. France immediately objected to "this sudden change in time," which it described as "arbitrary."¹⁴⁶ The Department asked the French representation at the UN to find allies to reject such a modification:

You should consult with our partners who are most sensitive to our arguments, in order to avoid finding ourselves isolated on this point. You will recall

*in particular that the members of the Council have already shown a spirit of compromise towards the Rwandans on several occasions, including with regard to the choice of a date prior to the beginning of the massacres in order to cover the period of planning for the genocide.*¹⁴⁷

In New York, France was joined by other delegations in rejecting the date of 1 October 1993, as “arbitrary.”¹⁴⁸ It asked the Americans for reasons for questioning the 1 January compromise, according to which “there was no other reason than to have a period of six months before the attack of 6 April and to allow for the prosecution of the author of a broadcast on radio “Mille Collines.” The United States undertook to inform Rwanda that “the 1 October date might be difficult for several delegations to accept.”¹⁴⁹

The French permanent representative was therefore pleased, on 26 October, that the compromise of 1 January 1994 was still on the latest draft. However, he was not certain that it would stand up to the new amendments proposed by Rwanda “which all seem unacceptable. In particular, they would like the tribunal to have jurisdiction for the period from 1 October 1990 (read: 1990) to 18 July 1994, the date of the end of hostilities.”¹⁵⁰ However, the main promoters of the statute, New Zealand and the United States, do not seem to be considering overcoming Rwanda’s opposition. The Americans, in particular, “indicate that their authorities do not intend to fight vigorously to retain the 1 January, 1994 start date and that it is probably up to us to intervene directly on our side to defend the compromise on this point, failing which they could offer the Rwandans some backward movement in time as a concession.”¹⁵¹ It was at this time that Mérimée strongly suggested that France should join the co-authors of the text, in order “to be able to counter possible unreasonable requests for amendments in a more effective manner.”¹⁵² The Department immediately declared that it shared his sentiment.¹⁵³

The first meeting in which France participated introduced two major changes. The term “genocide” was given greater prominence in the draft resolution and the draft statute of the tribunal. In addition, the tribunal’s temporal jurisdiction was given an end date.¹⁵⁴ Until now, all the attention had been on the beginning of that jurisdiction.

The end of the period was never really mentioned. On 10 October, it was still stated that it would be determined in the light of the report of the commission of experts.¹⁵⁵ On 25 October, the draft resolution stated that the end of the period of jurisdiction of the tribunal would be indicated by the Security Council within three months of the adoption of the resolution.¹⁵⁶ A sudden change occurred at the 26 October meeting. The participants retained a period of time from 1 January to 31 December 1994. This window is now indicated everywhere where the draft statute referred to crimes committed “since 1 January 1994.”¹⁵⁷

The starting point first proposed by Rwanda, 1 October 1990, was unanimously opposed.¹⁵⁸ Kigali then proposed closing the period on 15 July and, perhaps in an effort to convince the other delegations, offered a major concession by bringing forward the starting point to 6 April. The term of the tribunal’s temporal jurisdiction was indeed an essential point: extending it beyond the month of July seemed to place the new regime in Kigali under surveillance, by virtue of a reasoning that announced the thesis of the “double genocide,” in accordance with the prognosis made by Admiral Lanxade in April: “Now it is the Tutsi who will massacre the Hutu.”¹⁵⁹ The argument of “neutrality,” suggested by the United Kingdom to justify the date of 31 December, also goes in this direction. France approved this “compromise” with a comment of an aesthetic nature that overlooked the political issue: retaining the whole of 1994 avoided a “dry end.”¹⁶⁰

The government in Kigali is not mistaken: according to a confidential source, it is above all this extension of temporal jurisdiction that justifies the negative vote it is preparing to cast at the UN. A source close to the Prime Minister told Ambassador Jacques Courbin, the chargé d’affaires in Kigali, of the exchanges during a government cabinet meeting held at the beginning of November:

*The vote deciding the Rwandan position had been won only by the skin of its teeth: the supporters (mostly RPF) of the negative vote (and not of abstention) justified their attitude by a stubborn refusal to see the jurisdiction rationae temporis of the international tribunal extended to the period after July 1994. The fact that the death penalty was excluded from the range of penalties that could be decided by the international tribunal had certainly played a role, but to a lesser extent.*¹⁶¹

After reading Jacques Courbin's telegram, Jean-Bernard Mérimée observes, however, that Rwanda's permanent representative to the United Nations does not mention the question of extending the temporal jurisdiction beyond 15 July.¹⁶² Publicly, only the start date is criticized by Rwanda. In a *New York Times* article reported by the French ambassador to the United States, Paul Kagame explains why Rwanda will vote against the creation of the tribunal: "The fact that the tribunal does not have jurisdiction for the period before 1 January, 1994 will protect those who planned the genocide, as well as the French who are 'accomplices' in the genocide. He added that one day we will have to accuse the French of having been involved in the genocide."¹⁶³

France had to fight to the bitter end to maintain the 1 January date. Indeed, on the day of the vote, "both the United States and New Zealand showed themselves ready to propose a revision of the period of jurisdiction of the tribunal." New Zealand intends to propose "an advance of the starting date to 1990," no doubt, according to Merimee, to "offer the Rwandans a way to save face by putting others in trouble." The French permanent representative intervened energetically: "In order to obtain that the proposals to modify the period not be mentioned, I had to be very direct with the other co-authors on the unacceptable character in our eyes of a further move back in time."¹⁶⁴ Only Russia and the United Kingdom supported France on this point from the outset, but Resolution 955 of 8 November 1994 was eventually adopted, despite Rwanda's opposition and China's abstention, with thirteen votes in favor.

Jean-Bernard Mérimée considers the explanation of vote of the permanent representative of Rwanda to be "skillful," listing the reasons for Rwanda's negative vote. While he criticizes the "inadequate" dates set for the tribunal's jurisdiction, Manzi insists only on 1 January, not 31 December.¹⁶⁵ The same cannot be said of Merimee, whose concession about the tribunal's territorial jurisdiction changed in meaning with the extension of temporal jurisdiction. As he explains: the date of 31 December makes it possible "not to relinquish the Tribunal's jurisdiction over serious crimes that may have continued to be committed after

July 1994, on the territory of Rwanda and on the territory of neighboring states, i.e. primarily in the refugee camps.”¹⁶⁶ As suggested by the Department, in line with what is described as “the American view,”¹⁶⁷ Mérimée went so far as to add that “it goes without saying that, should major disturbances accompanied by violations of humanitarian law recur after the end of 1994, the Security Council would be justified in extending the temporal jurisdiction of the Tribunal beyond the term currently set.”¹⁶⁸

In his report to the Department, Mérimée observed that the Rwandan representative’s speech contained “several veiled but frankly hostile allusions to the States that had supported and continued to protect the perpetrators of the genocide.” A further postponement of the vote would undoubtedly have led to an “increasingly clear questioning of the role played by France in supporting President Habyarimana’s regime.” Thus, Mérimée insists on the role he played in getting the resolution adopted: “It is only at the price of energetic and direct intervention with the co-sponsors that we were able to obtain the vote on the text today without any significant change in its scope.”¹⁶⁹

6.3. FRANCE, RWANDA AND AFRICA

Diplomatic relations between Rwanda and the international community were completely disrupted by the genocide. The relief of Turquoise and its replacement by UNAMIR II are to the credit of the two states and the UN. However, the question of the ICTR and its competencies remained a point of deep disagreement and clashes between France and Rwanda.

In the ongoing power struggle between France and the RPF, Rwanda has less capacity. The new Rwandan state must rebuild the country. Economic and social resources are scarce. Economic aid is a necessity for the new Rwandan government. France has the capacity and experience to cooperate with Rwanda, which could help rebuild ties between the two states. At the international level, the new power must acquire legitimacy. The RPF’s conquest of power was achieved by force of arms. It is now important to give guarantees to the international community and

to show a willingness to appease. In the establishment of new relations between the two States, what is the share of legacies, what is the will to establish new relations? What is the share of representations and postures?

6.3.1 A difficult diplomatic normalization

The diplomatic normalization that was accepted by France and the other states in the UN Security Council continued in the following months. France has a limited “diplomatic office” in Kigali composed of a senior diplomat, a chargé d’affaires and four security guards. The Rwandans requested the accreditation of a new ambassador to Paris. However, beyond the forms of diplomacy, relations between the two states remain marked by a certain tension.

The new authorities in Kigali made particularly negative comments about France, which could not accept them without reacting, but which nevertheless wanted to improve relations between the two States. At the United Nations, for example, Jean-Bernard Mérimée met with his Rwandan counterpart in August. After meeting with the former and new Rwandan representatives, the permanent representative concluded that, implicitly, his interlocutors considered that “the aid provided by France would only be fair compensation for the responsibility it bore for the misfortunes of the Rwandan people.”¹⁷⁰

France finds itself in a contradictory situation: concerned about its place in Rwanda, which it does not want to cede to others, it feels trapped by constant attacks from Rwanda or elsewhere. It does not want to let these accusations go. Several memos from the DAM in October 1994 to the attention of the head of French diplomacy raise the question of diplomatic appeasement, and of the opportunities to be seized, because France must not lose its place nor its role in French-speaking Africa; the fear, always present, of the growing influence of the Anglo-Saxons, incites the defense of the French-speaking world and of the “*pré carré*” (preserve) in one way or another. Opportunities exist to “put us in a position to influence the course of events in the right direction”:¹⁷¹ France could invite the Rwandan Minister of Agriculture to

the signing of the Convention on Desertification, scheduled to take place in Paris on 15 October; the French chargé d'affaires could be appointed ambassador; cultural cooperation could resume fairly quickly, while technical cooperation remains in the hands of the European Union. Minister Alain Juppé is “not hostile to these orientations. But it is necessary to demand an end to all attacks and accusations against France by the authorities in Kigali,”¹⁷² said Jean-Michel de La Sablière on 21 October, 1994.

The stings and attacks made cooperation difficult. Everyone was watching each other. However, Rwanda was demanding, especially on questions of development aid, which were urgent. The UN played a central role in this aid while waiting for bilateral cooperation to resume. On 21 October, the UNDP proposed financing a mission by ADETEF (*Assistance au développement des échanges en technologies économiques et financières*), a French organization that depends on the General Inspection of Finance. Accepting would be in contradiction with the line chosen by the government, but the risk of seeing the mission entrusted to another organization, Anglo-Saxon for example, and the future prospects for France in Francophone Africa put in the balance, pushed the DAM not to oppose the mission.¹⁷³

In addition, at the end of October 1994, the question of inviting Rwanda to the Biarritz summit remained for French officials, even though the summit was scheduled for early November. A memo found in Bruno Delaye’s archives shows the questions that President Mitterrand’s advisors were asking themselves.¹⁷⁴ The two-part memo sets out the arguments in favor of an invitation with the following remarks: “turning the page,” “not helping it is to increase the risk of a new ethnic war, of new massacres.” However, other unfavorable arguments are put forward: “The RPF and the Rwandan government, despite appeasing declarations, remain very hostile to France [...] they have not officially expressed the desire to be present in Biarritz.” The memo points out the divisions within the Rwandan government. While Faustin Twagiramungu and Pasteur Bizimungu are said to be very interested, this is not the case for Kagame who is looking for “openings from the Belgians, Israelis, Libyans and Anglo-Saxons.” Finally, the presence of Rwanda in Biarritz risks “diverting” the summit

and making the Rwandan crisis the sole concern of the media. It is specified that an opinion has been requested from the Quai d'Orsay "which is hesitant." The memo includes a "*très signalé*" (highly reported) from Hubert Védrine and a "no" accentuated by two lines below from François Mitterrand.¹⁷⁵

6.3.2 Franco-Rwandan relations in the light of the Biarritz summit, 7-8 November 1994

6.3.2.I THE BIARRITZ SUMMIT

The Biarritz summit, which took place on 7 and 8 November 1994, was the eighteenth Franco-African summit. It brought together 35 African states and France and was organized around three themes: "democracy, development, and security." Four states have never been invited: South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Eritrea. This was the last Franco-African summit of François Mitterrand, whose mandate ends in May 1995. A certain solemnity surrounds it.

Four years after the La Baule summit (20 June, 1990), the time had come for a first assessment in terms of democratization of the countries of the continent, but also in terms of development aid. However, there is another underlying issue: the evaluation of the effects of the 50 percent devaluation of the CFA franc, which was carried out in January 1994 and which had long been requested by the IMF. This devaluation was accompanied by structural adjustment plans piloted by the IMF and the World Bank.

François Mitterrand's speech focused on "the democratization of Africa, the proposal to create an inter-African intervention force for conflict prevention and the organization of development and growth." After greeting his guests, François Mitterrand structured his remarks around three questions: "How to build and consolidate the rule of law in Africa? This is a fundamental question"; "How to prevent conflicts, how to stop wars and violence?"; "How to organize development and growth in a continuous manner, because, as has been said many times, but too often ignored, none of these terms are valid without the others." During this speech, President Mitterrand

returned to the issue of Rwanda on two or three occasions. He emphasized the efforts made by France in the search for peace:

We were close to solutions. After the Arusha negotiations that began in July 1992 and were concluded in August 1993, the conditions of President Habyarimana's death, the civil war and the genocide that followed, interrupted a peacemaking process that had been approved by all parties [...].
After deciding to withdraw UNAMIR as soon as the first massacres occurred, the United Nations adopted Resolution 918 on 17 May, authorizing the sending of a new contingent to Kigali. One month after this vote, no soldiers had arrived in Kigali and the first troops were not announced until mid-August. It was then that we made the decision to proceed with Operation Turquoise. They wanted us to stay at the starting point and then they wanted to keep us. The mandate of the Turquoise mission, approved by the Security Council, was to save men, women, and children until the United Nations force arrived in Rwanda.¹⁷⁶

The press conference at the end of the summit provided an opportunity, as it often does, to revisit certain points. In an article in *Le Monde* dated 11 November, 1994, François Mitterrand returned to the absence of the Kigali government: "Its desire to come was not clearly expressed to me," and then he added, "but we do not object in principle to the presence of Rwanda," a presence that "is and will be necessary." The article goes back to his speech. The oral version differs from the written version. Orally, he spoke of "the genocide," the newspaper reported. François Mitterrand added in the press conference: "In writing it was in the plural and orally it was in the singular. These are the mysteries of eloquence." Answering the journalist who asked him which is the right version, F. Mitterrand answered "well, I wonder too" before adding, later in the press conference "I am bound by what I say."

No doubt this symbolic but important question is not perceived in the same way by the Rwandan authorities. The chargé d'affaires in Kigali recounts, ten days after the summit, the conversation he had with Mr. Khan. The latter had met, a few days earlier, with General Kagame, who had expressed his incomprehension with regard to the French position:

It seems that the French government is trying to humiliate us: we have tried to have better relations with France but each time the answer

has been negative (he referred to the refusal of Paris to receive the Prime Minister).

Then General Kagame continued: “What are we being reproached for?” Mr. Khan, says Jacques Courbin, “told me that he was surprised by his interlocutor’s insistence on convincing him of his good faith in establishing better relations with our country.”¹⁷⁷ The Biarritz summit did not mark a calming of relations between France and Rwanda. The confusion between the written and the spoken word does not help to dissipate the sources of tension between the two states.

6.3.2.2 THE STALEMATE IN FRANCO-RWANDAN RELATIONS

The issues that were pending before Biarritz remain: the level of French representation in Rwanda and the question of international aid.

At the end of November, when the United States, Germany, Belgium and China appointed an ambassador to Rwanda, and the Rwandan ambassador arrived in Paris on 13 November, the Quai d’Orsay began to reflect once again on the level of relations between France and Rwanda. A memo from the Director of African and Malagasy Affairs dated 15 November¹⁷⁸ repeated the proposals for improving diplomatic relations, without much change. Other memos were sent. One, a joint memo from the DAM and NUOI dated 28 November¹⁷⁹ and the other from the Director of the Cabinet of the Minister of Foreign Affairs dated 8 December,¹⁸⁰ attest to this activity; with what arguments and why was there a delay on the part of France when it was the second country after China to approve an ambassador from Rwanda?

The internal situation in Rwanda is worrying, the return of refugees is too slow, the state of the camps is deteriorating, and the authorities in Kigali are insisting on international aid to deal with the various problems. France, which has taken a back seat diplomatically due to its limited representation, is accused of holding up the release of aid that the international community is willing to provide. The international dynamic and support for the rehabilitation of Rwanda risk leaving it in the background when “it must be present in certain key sectors to maintain our influence in the region: education, culture, health, legal framework,”¹⁸¹ says Dominique de Villepin.

In addition to these justifications linked to France's interests, there are arguments concerning Rwanda's pressing request. The international community, including France, mobilized. The European Union Development Council met on 25 November and decided to release ECU 67 million for the rehabilitation of infrastructure and social sectors, and ECU 5 million for European observers for the operation of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights¹⁸² and approved the release of a first tranche of ECU 440 million;¹⁸³ in addition, it made contributions through NGOs.¹⁸⁴

However, the authorities in Kigali considered the international aid essential for recovery to be insufficient, and blamed it on France, which they accused of imposing its conditions. Paris clearly defends itself, because the principle of conditionality and progressiveness of aid is a decision of the European Union and international bodies, it is linked to the return of refugees, and "our support for the decision of the European Union Development Council of 25 November responds to those who accused us of blocking aid. We can make that case,"¹⁸⁵ said H. Colin de Verdière and J.-M. de La Sablière. For his part, in New York, Jean-Bernard Mérimée corrected his counterpart: "What we were saying was that national reconciliation and the restoration of confidence in Rwanda were necessary to allow the international community to become more involved in the resolution of the Rwandan crisis."¹⁸⁶

At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the proposals of NUOI and DAM, as well as those of the Director of the Cabinet, are along the same lines. For the former, it is necessary to maintain a progressive approach, but to be open by accelerating the date of presentation of the credentials of the Rwandan ambassador, to congratulate the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Anastase Gasana, and to suggest a meeting with Alain Juppé. It is important to continue the dialogue in other sectors: agriculture, public works, health.¹⁸⁷ The proposal, already made, transmitted by Dominique de Villepin, that the head of the post, Jacques Courbin, be elevated to the title of ambassador, and that he be accompanied by a humanitarian attaché from the Ministry of Cooperation, was reiterated. The Ministry of Cooperation and the Prime Minister's diplomatic unit were in favor of this,

but the head of government had to refer the matter to the presidency of the Republic “in order to obtain its agreement”¹⁸⁸: the formula shows that the subject had already been raised and that approval was needed.¹⁸⁹ Beyond that, in the multilateral context, and at a time when Rwanda is presiding over the Security Council,¹⁹⁰ it is essential that working relations within the United Nations be appeased: “This is self-evident and can be emphasized if necessary.” Coordination should help improve the plight of the refugees and work towards national reconciliation by promoting “the enlargement of the government in Kigali through negotiations with a group of exiles that would, however, exclude those responsible for the genocide. This is what Mérimée tried to do with Manzi, who found it regrettable that the dialogue was insufficient and that Rwanda had not been invited to the Biarritz summit, and who maintained his suspicion of France in past events.”¹⁹¹

After Biarritz, relations between France and Rwanda entered a new phase of cooling. The question of the level of French diplomatic representation in Rwanda is only the revelation of profound disagreements. On the other hand, if aid is necessary, France wishes to deploy it within the European framework. The question of its conditionality is raised. A certain continuity in French policy must be acknowledged: since the beginning of 1993, this conditionality, apart from the case of exceptional aid in the framework of humanitarian aid, has guided French policy. It adds political conditions. On the Rwandan side, the question of aid was an opportunity to assert its full sovereignty and to demand from Paris a form of recognition of responsibility for the genocide.

During this period when French diplomacy was seeking a position vis-à-vis Rwanda, the idea of a rapid inter-African peacekeeping force emerged as a possible solution to future crises on the continent.

6.4 THE QUESTION OF A RAPID INTER-AFRICAN PEACEKEEPING FORCE

The experience of Rwanda, the weakness of the OAU at the UN due to the difficulty of its members to reach an agreement, and the slow mobilization of the international community to support UNAMIR II prompted France to think about a more rapid instrument to encourage

the involvement of African states in security and peacekeeping operations on the continent. While Operation Turquoise was in action, a reflection was conducted within the DAS, at the Ministry of Defense, during the summer of 1994: two memos were sent to Minister François Léotard,¹⁹² completed by a third that drew more directly on the Rwandan experience.¹⁹³

The idea of creating a “rapid peacekeeping force” was taken up by Prime Minister Édouard Balladur in Dakar on 27 July: “It seems to me to be urgent to study the setting up of a specifically African structure capable of intervening rapidly in Africa for peacekeeping operations. France and the European institutions, but also other contributors, could cooperate in such a project.” He emphasizes the need for African countries to be more involved in conflict prevention and resolution, for the OAU to be the main pivot, and for the EU and WEU to be clearly involved in supporting preventive and peacekeeping actions.¹⁹⁴

It emerges from the discussions and plans that the rapid reaction force should be organized by the OAU, the European Union and the WEU: on the European side, the European Union would be the interlocutor between the Organization of African Union and the Western European Organization, for political and financial reasons; the WEU would act as an “organizational advisor and service provider” and would liaise with the OAU.¹⁹⁵ The rapid reaction force would be composed of two or three members, one of whom would be a member of the OAU. This rapid force would be composed of two or three modules of 5,000 men in total; immediate logistical assistance would come from Europe, until the specialized African units were operational.¹⁹⁶ The UN was in favor of this project. It must grant a mandate to allow this rapid force to intervene in emergency situations, while a multinational force is being created.

This French idea must convince France’s European partners, within the framework of the European Union, by putting forward the CFSP, and the WEU: Italy and Spain must be interested in giving the WEU new competences. The United Kingdom, which has an African past, should be approached; however, the former colonial relations of these two states show some reticence - and London’s support for France in Rwanda was limited.

“Some will see in this a resurgence of a more global competition in this region [...] We might wish at least to develop politico-military exchanges on the evolution of the continent and reciprocal information on the military and humanitarian operations conducted by the two countries .”¹⁹⁷ Yet this cooperation was all the more necessary because the inter-African force would need contingents from English-speaking countries. Chancellor Kohl suggested the formation of a “humanitarian intervention corps,”¹⁹⁸ and the Franco-German couple could serve as a driving force to “attract other member countries sensitive to African issues.”¹⁹⁹ But above all, by proposing to involve European organizations, one must not give the impression that France is offloading future crises onto them.²⁰⁰

If the Europeans provide significant material, financial and logistical support, as well as their know-how, the new force must be African and this is the responsibility of the OAU, which must take the lead. “Politically, it is essential that this force be open to all African countries. However, an initial assessment shows that only a few OAU countries, especially English-speaking ones, would be reasonably able to contribute to this force”²⁰¹: Egypt, Morocco (which is not a member of the OAU), and South Africa are the three countries most likely to provide competent personnel and equipment. It is important to avoid “a logic that is too exclusively Francophone.”²⁰²

What were the reactions in Africa? During the Biarritz conference, the inter-African force project was once again put forward and rather well received. On the sidelines of the summit, the president of Togo, Gnassingbé Eyadéma, was asked by his Francophone counterparts to make proposals,²⁰³ with the support of France. In Senegal, the authorities recognized the weakness of the continent’s means of protection and supported the project for an inter-African force.²⁰⁴ The Ministry of the Armed Forces put forward proposals, but raises the question of how to activate the force, the area of intervention, the missions and the financing. Yannick Gérard, the deputy director of African Affairs at the Quai d’Orsay, returned to this issue in a long telegram on 14 December, 1994.²⁰⁵ He recommended maintaining close contact with the OAU, which was not sufficiently involved in Western projects and which wanted to coordinate crisis prevention and management actions in Africa. To

support the OAU, Yannick Gérard must go to Addis Ababa where the OAU is based and to Tunis.

Finally, the material issue is essential, especially in light of the experience of the inter-African battalion supported by France and deployed first with Operation Turquoise and then with UNAMIR. This battalion was continuously supported by the French army before and during Operation Turquoise, without which these units would not have been able to operate in Rwanda. The lack of sufficient quantity and quality of equipment is one of the main obstacles to any military projection. Thus, from the outset, the inter-African force project came up against the wall of reality. Moreover, the practical questions of which bases and storage centers to select are directly opposed to the sovereignty of states.

Faced with these questions of seeing African states intervene in Africa rather than Western states, analysts realized early on that the logistical question was vital to the establishment of this force. Thus, as early as 2 July, Colonel Mourgeon, in the memo he wrote for the Delegation for Strategic Affairs at the Ministry of Defense, underlined the extent of the problem.²⁰⁶ Point 5 of the chapter on the principles of organisation of an inter-African force deals not only with equipment but also with the related and equally important aspects of storage and strategic mobility. Indeed, the creation of resource centers appears to be a necessity if one wishes to allow “the complete equipment of a force and ensure that they [the centers] are maintained in condition.”²⁰⁷ Similarly, Colonel Mourgeon points to the importance of strategic transport capabilities for this putative force, which immediately raises the question of financing. Finally, in terms of strategic transport, the maintenance of certain equipment existing in African countries (Batral-C 130, for example, in Gabon, Chad, Nigeria, etc.) could be taken care of by donor countries.²⁰⁸

Thus, the DAS emphasized at the beginning of July that the material question and with it the financial question were going to pose a direct problem insofar as it would be necessary to set up these centers, maintain the necessary means of transport, while at the same time finding donors for whom this project would be a relevant policy.

In addition, the question of the status of permanent centers, a necessary condition for optimal availability of stocks, remains unresolved. The Senegalese Ministry of the Armed Forces reminded the French ambassador in Dakar of this fact, and the latter reported on it in a TD of 4 November 1994.²⁰⁹ The Senegalese ministry, while approving the principle of a general secretariat and a staff to support this putative force, points out, however, that the presence of foreign military forces on the territory of other states seems largely irrational. Behind this questioning, which lasted from the beginning of July to the end of 1994, the DAS evoked a problem in the background. In the post-Cold War era, what type of military intervention could France undertake on its own? A multilateral solution is certainly preferable, but the means and the will must still be available. Moreover, this reflection, which is contemporary to Operation Turquoise, raises the question of its duplication to other states or other regions in the event of a major international crisis, particularly a humanitarian one. Asking the question is probably already part of the answer.

The mission assigned by Edouard Balladur's government to Bernard Dufourcq and General Germanos on 19 July to the new Rwandan government was, in many respects, a success. The French forces were replaced by UNAMIR II. The issue of international justice was accepted by both parties. Within the UN framework, the ICTR was created. In many ways, the period from 18 July to the end of December 1994 was a time for diplomacy. France showed a certain talent at the UN to make its views prevail.

After refusing to arrest those responsible for the genocide, France was heavily involved at the UN in the creation of the International Criminal Tribunal. It often opposed the wishes of the new Rwandan government, and in particular fought to prevent the tribunal from ruling on facts that were too old, at the risk of calling into question the support it had given to President Habyarimana's regime. Moreover, while the French authorities at the UN use the word "genocide," they never name the perpetrators. The extension of the temporal jurisdiction of the future tribunal for acts committed

up to 31 December, 1994, a period that France emphasizes is likely to be extended, shows that in the minds of the French authorities, the RPF must also be tried.

These difficult relations with the new Rwandan government are also reflected in the Biarritz conference, a moment of diplomatic representation par excellence for France - it is a Franco-African summit - and for François Mitterrand. It is an illustration of France's capacity to exist and to exercise its power outside its borders. In this representation of power play, the non-invitation of the new Rwandan government deprives it of an international stage but also, and perhaps above all, of international recognition by France and other African heads of State. In this balancing act between a demand for justice and an equally great demand for recognition, Rwanda feels it has been wronged. François Mitterrand's hesitation on the question of the genocide or genocides, and his hesitant willingness to appoint an ambassador to Kigali are the hallmark of this.

Several questions remain on which France has undoubtedly not fully decided: what is its place in Central and Eastern Africa now that Zaire, an economically and financially drained state, appears threatened by political instability within its borders? Is the multilateral framework now the best way to act in this region of Africa? The reflection initiated by the DAS on an inter-African intervention force faces serious problems: the question of means, certainly, but also of France's relays in Africa, capable of exercising diplomatic and military action. France has no answer to this question. Other questions are part of a longer historical logic, that of an international justice that cannot be expeditious and whose conceptions diverge according to the states. Finally, on what basis and how to negotiate with what was yesterday the designated enemy, the RPF, and which is now at the head of Rwanda?²¹⁰

PART THREE

GOVERNING THE STATE IN THE RWANDAN CRISIS

chapter 7

Institutional drift, the unthinkable genocide and republican freedom

This concluding section, in the form of a single chapter, brings together, synthesizes, and extends the findings and analyses established in the previous chapters. These chapters follow the chronology of the five reference years. To this end, some of the archives used previously can be reused in this final chapter, without any repetition, since they are used for cross-sectional or long-term studies.

This chapter also includes new research based on sets of archives that have never been processed or used in the form of a coherent corpus, in particular the memos of the private staff of the President of the Republic, supplemented by correspondence that has been found, as well as the reconstituted series of minutes of the 1993-1994 defense councils, and the most complete set possible of reports from State institutions that offer a general, often critical or distanced reflection on France's involvement in Rwanda and the withdrawal of public action in the face of genocide. This collection includes an interesting extension of the memos, files and analyses produced in the framework of the preparatory work of the "Rwanda units" created for the 1998 Parliamentary Information Mission. The use of public archives follows the practice of the previous chapters, where the analysis is based on the information contained in the documents, but also on the representations that they unveil and what they reveal about the relationship of institutions with archives.

This chapter is structured in three main parts, corresponding to the study of institutions and authorities responsible or in charge of French policies in Rwanda, to the study of institutions with regard to a body

of internal analyses covering the reference period, and finally to an attempt to understand a political power and a republican State challenged by the last genocide of the twentieth century, which occurred in a continent that was the space of the European colonial power.

This cross-cutting, critical and documented analysis leads to three observations: the extent of institutional abuses resulting from multiple deviations from the norm, each of which does not necessarily have consequences, but whose accumulation and systematization end up creating a system with overwhelming responsibilities; an impossibility of thinking about the genocide that is coming, bordering on intellectual collapse, which testifies to a worrying conceptual weakness of public action and even a profound cognitive blockage; finally, an awareness on the part of a minority of actors of the seriousness of the problems revealed, an attempt on the part of some to react and to fight as the republican education teaches civil servants to do, and on the part of others a desire to think in terms of the ethics of action and of the common good.

7.1 APPROACH OF THE INSTITUTIONS IN CHARGE OR IN CHARGE OF FRENCH POLICIES IN RWANDA

7.1.1 *A “president to president” policy*

The detailed study of France’s involvement in Rwanda highlights the major weight of the presidency of the Republic and François Mitterrand’s particular interest in this policy of assistance and cooperation for a country on the African continent. The possibility of making Rwanda a “laboratory” for new directions for Africa, as described in Chapter 1, is coupled with a direct “president to president” relationship: this relationship has an immediate and important impact on the political relationship between the two countries.

7.1.1.1 A DIRECT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND AND JUVÉNAL HABYARIMANA

President Mitterrand’s exchanges of letters, telephone calls, and

meetings with his Rwandan counterpart were numerous and frequent. They confirm the close relationship between the two men and, it must be acknowledged, the level of power at which French policy in Rwanda is decided.

Studying the organization of these relations, their concretization, their rhythm, and their content allows us to see the extent these personal links play in France's support policy in Rwanda. If François Mitterrand frees himself from the regular procedures to make decisions or if his cabinet, the General Staff, and the Africa advisor intervene, influence, and inflect the decisions of the head of state. The question arises as to the impact of the perception of this "president to president" relationship on the cabinet level - and beyond that, on the administrative level - and whether it signifies a special focus on Rwanda by the head of state. The first chapter of the report and the following ones answer this question by noting the "experimental" character of this small African State that entered late in the so-called "field" countries.

Conversations took place during meetings on trips, telephone meetings,¹ and letter exchanges. Between 1990 and 1993, Juvénal Habyarimana met five times, at his request, with François Mitterrand at the Élysée, and twice during international conferences (during the conference of heads of State of Africa and France in La Baule from 19 to 21 June, 1990, and during the Francophonie summit at the Palais de Chaillot from 19 to 21 November, 1991), stopping off during trips to New York or Belgium, and especially to meet with the French head of state. The exchanges of letters reflect their privileged relationship²: in addition to the formal letters, on the occasion of the national holiday of each of the two States,³ there are quite a few letters sent directly or transmitted by a third party, an ambassador, or a minister. President Habyarimana asked to meet with his counterpart; this was generally the occasion for memos to which François Mitterrand systematically replied with a "yes" in the margin. Thus, his cabinet was informed, and the meetings were prepared by means of note cards sent to the President.

The questions addressed concerned the democratization

and negotiation process on the one hand, on which the French president insisted, and on the other hand, questions of security and therefore military support that the Rwandan president insisted on from October 1990. A few months earlier, in May, during a meeting at the Élysée, François Mitterrand announced aid to create a television station in Rwanda, but it was not until 1992 that the Ministry of Cooperation released aid of 15 million francs.⁴ It was from the beginning of the 1990s that the French government began to take action to support the Rwandan government. It was after the RPF attack on 1 October 1990, that Habyarimana counted on France's help and President Mitterrand to act. On this occasion, Habyarimana addressed him in two stages, first on 4 October through the Chadian president, Hissène Habré, whom he sent a message: "The President of Rwanda 'wanted military support from France, if possible in the form of an air intervention.'⁵" On 16 October, it was a "very worried, even panicked" president who received Ambassador Georges Martres and the defense attaché, Colonel Galinié, to ask for France's help.⁶ In order to obtain what he felt was essential, Juvénal Habyarimana planned to go to Paris on 14 October. He did not do so but asked to call François Mitterrand as soon as possible with a list of his requests for military equipment, in addition to the air support already requested by Hissène Habré.⁷ Only urgently needed ammunition was granted,⁸ but the Rwandan president insisted strongly on the promises made by the President of the Republic.⁹

Paris, an obligatory stopover

France never ceases to encourage the democratization of Rwanda, which the President expressly recalled in February 1991 in a message to Juvénal Habyarimana in which he intended to "encourage him to negotiate with the RPF, to respect human rights and to participate in a conference on refugees, while at the same time accentuating the process of domestic political openness. Only at this price will French military aid be continued."¹⁰ In April 1991, Juvénal Habyarimana went to Belgium and took advantage of the opportunity to meet with the French president on 23 April.¹¹ The Rwandan president reported his meeting to his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Casimir Bizimungu, who in turn gave Georges Martres the content of the meeting, which was reported uncritically by the ambassador to the DAM.¹²

François Mitterrand's interest seemed to be very great. He promised to put pressure on Museveni, but above all he was willing to provide significant military aid: the DAMI would become a permanent detachment, Noroît would remain in Rwanda until the cease-fire, Colonel Canovas would be kept on for a year and a permanent technical advisor would be available; finally, the President promised substantial military equipment. The list is long and seems to have no trade-off, judging by the ambassador's report: President Mitterrand did not react when his interlocutor expressed his opposition to sharing power with the Tutsi, because, he said, he did not want the RPF. Clearly, the report casts a totally favorable light on the Rwandan regime and is partly contradictory to François Mitterrand's memo of the previous 2 February. Is this an irreversible engagement? A memo from the Armed Forces Staff, seen by Admiral Lanxade, suggests some flexibility with regard to Noroît: "it is absolutely necessary to avoid an 'installation'."¹³ An additional remark mentions the "excellent relations," the "privileged relations" between the two presidents,¹⁴ which prevented the decision from being countered, adding that the difficult situation in Rwanda did not allow, in any case, the withdrawal of the DAMI. This meeting shows the effectiveness of the tête-à-tête and the sympathy of the French president, who does not consult his cabinet before making promises.

The next meeting, of which we have a record, took place on 17 July 1992 in Paris, and its preparation reflects the Rwandan president's methods of remaining very present. Sylvestre Nsanzimana, a former prime minister and adviser to Habyarimana, toured Europe to present the situation in Rwanda and to obtain aid.¹⁵ In this context, Juvénal Habyarimana sent a long message dated 6 May to President Mitterrand, whom he thanked for his "firm," "invaluable" and very useful support.¹⁶ He described the situation in Rwanda and its progress in terms of democratization, as well as the insecurity and economic difficulties, and he expected François Mitterrand to intervene in the direction of Uganda, the IMF, and the World Bank. On this occasion, he announced his upcoming visit to Paris. On 16 June, a memo was sent with a request for an audience, to which the president responded positively.¹⁷ The two presidents met on 17 July. A memo prepared beforehand for a

meeting that did not take place, transmitted by General Huchon, revealed the points that François Mitterrand addressed: encouragement for democratization, military aid, protection of French nationals. “Moreover, France continues to seek ways to strengthen the support it can give to Rwanda without directly engaging its military resources.”¹⁸ The French president’s promises are equivalent to engagements. Thus, a few days after the meeting, he wrote a letter to his counterpart transmitted by Ambassador Martres. After encouraging Habyarimana to continue along the path of democratization and the search for a cease-fire, he reassured his correspondent: “I wish to confirm to you, in any case, the will of my country not to allow Rwanda to be destabilized”¹⁹: the dispatch of a second company to ensure the protection of French and foreign nationals attests to this. Why was this written confirmation necessary? Habyarimana was aware of the reluctance that this aid aroused. When Georges Martres handed over the letter, he reported Habyarimana’s comments: he was aware “that the support that President Mitterrand had given him without reservation at each of their meetings did not seem to be shared in France at all levels.”²⁰ But he knew he could count on General Quesnot, the chief of the general staff.

An exchange of correspondence sheds light on the relations between the two presidents and their consequences. “As we agreed during my visit to Paris, I have the honor of writing you this letter to keep you informed of developments in Rwanda.”²¹ On 5 December, 1992, Habyarimana sent a long letter to François Mitterrand, outlining the situation in the country, with the persistent threats of the RPF, the problems arising from the implementation of the Arusha Accords, and the profound economic difficulties, while emphasizing his desire for national reconciliation. “Given the seriousness of the situation and its potentially explosive nature, I can only ask you to continue to maintain the current French military presence, at least until the elections. This presence is a stabilizing factor [...] and provides the French and international community with a much appreciated guarantee of protection.”²² On this occasion, he asked for the extension of the devoted ambassador Georges Martres who had reached the age limit.

François Mitterrand read this letter carefully and took the time to underline it with his usual blue pencil. Eager to defend the democratization of the country, to support Habyarimana and to preserve France's image, Mitterrand stresses his attachment to the Arusha Accords. "I do not want France to be reproached for having hindered the proper application of the agreement, but I would like to confirm that, on the question of the presence of the *Noroît* detachment, France will act in agreement with the Rwandan authorities."²³ While Habyarimana attached to his letter two speeches he had given in which, as a good student, he insisted on the democratization of Africa,²⁴ the content of the French president's letter likens him to the wise man, the master who encourages and incites his disciple to patience and respect for democracy: "National reconciliation in Rwanda requires, it seems to me, a transitional period during which all the communities and political forces should be associated within the government until elections are held within a reasonable timeframe.²⁵ Important steps have been taken, and I would like to reiterate my support for this process."²⁶ Habyarimana completes the formula of official politeness with a handwritten note marking his "constant friendship"; Mitterrand concludes in the same way with a formula of encouragement: "[the assurance] and my wish to be able to help you in your task to the best of my ability. Yours."²⁷ And he agreed to receive him during his next visit to Paris.²⁸

In early 1993, during a trip to the United States, Habyarimana made a two-day stopover in Paris. François Mitterrand received him on 8 February at 6 p.m., after his meetings with several officials, as specified in the organization of his visit: Bruno Delaye, the diplomatic advisor to the *Élysée*, Marcel Debarge, Minister of Cooperation, and the Chief of Staff, General Quesnot.²⁹

The context of autumn 1993 worried Habyarimana: after the Arusha Accords and the formation of a coalition government, and after the UN vote for an international force that led to the departure of *Noroît*, the Rwandan head of state feared France's disengagement, especially since the RPF was opposed to the presence of French peacekeepers. On his way back from the United States, where he had gone for the United Nations General Assembly, Habyarimana had a stopover in Paris. Although it was "a private visit,"³⁰ the French president received him on

11 October.³¹ Ambassador Jean-Michel Marlaud said that he wanted to thank François Mitterrand and “make sure that our interest in his country will not wane after the implementation of the peace agreement. In this regard, he should mention our participation in the reconstruction, but even more so in the future of our military presence, in which he sees a guarantee of security and stability.”³² Habyarimana also asked to meet with Alain Juppé. The minister’s office supported a positive response.³³

This new trip by Habyarimana was also an opportunity for him to have meetings with “the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, the diplomatic advisor to the Prime Minister, the director of African and Malagasy Affairs, the deputy director of the office of the Minister of Cooperation, and General Huchon, head of the military cooperation mission.”³⁴ The Rwandan president knows how to mobilize the authorities, including at the highest level, who decide on French policy in his country. His efforts are focused on pursuing an action for his benefit, in particular the maintenance of a military presence. As the Quai d’Orsay writes, “President Habyarimana has warmly thanked France for the assistance it has constantly provided to Rwanda. He was particularly sensitive to the efforts made (DAMI Noroît) to avoid a military solution, to our active accompaniment of the Arusha negotiations, and to our diplomatic action in favor of the involvement of the United Nations until the adoption of Resolution 872.”³⁵

Bruno Delaye suggested that the President of the Republic give certain assurances to his interlocutor³⁶: France would be able to adapt its mechanism and continue to provide support to Rwanda, and to this end the future transitional government with a broad base must quickly express what it expected in terms of military and economic aid. Juvénal Habyarimana appeared very satisfied with this visit. He “welcomes the happy conclusions that emerged from our meeting,” he wrote to François Mitterrand, once again expressing his gratitude.³⁷ This laudatory assessment is paradoxical because, in response to his requests to maintain powerful military resources in Rwanda, “President Habyarimana was told that, in keeping with the provisions of the Arusha agreements, France would withdraw its troops once the international force had been deployed in Kigali. Its participation in this force could not be envisaged.”³⁸ But the contradiction can be resolved if

we note in Jean-Marc de La Sablière's account an apparently cryptic sentence that is also fraught with meaning: "Generally speaking, President Habyarimana was assured that France did not intend to lose interest in Rwanda in the future and that it would continue to support him."³⁹ France, represented by such interlocutors, starting with the President of the Republic, is welcoming and understanding, so the Rwandan president took other opportunities to meet with him.

President Habyarimana's use of personal proximity to the head of State

Presidential decisions are not always discussed in advance, which suggests a more personal policy, as the head of state does not always take the trouble to inform his advisors or ministers. The latter have to put up with this, as shown by several examples which underline, on the other hand, how much his Rwandan counterpart uses this proximity, invoking promises made to him by François Mitterrand to impose himself on the French emissaries.

In October 1990, Habyarimana insisted on François Mitterrand's promise of significant aid, to the point that the Africa advisor seemed surprised. He emphasized this insistent mention of promises on the telegram from Martres before passing it on to the president.⁴⁰ After the meeting of the two heads of State in mid-July, the Department belatedly informed the diplomats concerned about the referral to the Security Council promised by François Mitterrand: "For your personal intervention, when the President of the Republic received President Habyarimana, he told him that in the event of Uganda's direct involvement in the conflict, France would support Rwanda's referral to the Security Council."⁴¹

Dominique Pin pointed out in a memo that the agreements signed by the government and the RPF in Arusha on 10 January, 1993, were very badly received by President Habyarimana: he regretted that his observations had not been taken into account, as if someone wanted to remove him from power; he considered himself to be presented with a "fait accompli" and threatened to reject what had already been negotiated. After reading this memo, François Mitterrand asked that his counterpart be dealt with directly,⁴² thus signifying that this matter was not the responsibility of the Quai d'Orsay but of the Élysée. Was it this

memo and Habyarimana's reaction that prompted Mitterrand to respond the next day to the letter that Habyarimana had sent him in early December, which he had read very closely? With his blue pencil, he annotates two pages of the letter, some points of which need to be answered: concerning France's military presence and food aid, and concerning the extension of Ambassador Georges Martres. It is indeed the Élysée that extends the mission of the ambassador, who is very attentive to the power in Kigali, even though he is due to retire, and his successor has already been appointed.⁴³

On 12 February, François Mitterrand's Africa advisor and the director of African and Malagasy Affairs were in Kigali with the Rwandan president and prime minister. According to the diplomatic correspondence, in addition to the ambassador and the defense attaché, Colonel Delort, who commanded the French forces in Rwanda, was present "at all these meetings". From the first meeting with the head of state, the latter "stressed that President Mitterrand had told him that there was 'no question of allowing the RPF to take power by force of arms'."⁴⁴

The ritual of meetings between presidents

It was also at the Élysée that the meetings between the two heads of State were prepared, mainly by Bruno Delaye. On the occasion of the one scheduled for 11 October 1993, he drew up a long memo for François Mitterrand. Very precise and firm, the suggestions indicate that the Élysée's Africa advisor was drawing up the political line to be followed: "The President will be able to insist on the importance we attach to the strict respect of the peace agreement by both parties and on the responsibility they have for the satisfactory progress of the transition."⁴⁵ Sensitive to the Rwandan president's rhetoric, including his excesses, the president finally forced his entourage to back down and accommodate rather than let Habyarimana fall.

Traditionally, the two presidents exchange greetings for the New Year. For 1994, François Mitterrand emphasized the loyalty of France, which would help the country's development. "I renew my wish to encourage the strengthening of the ties that unite the French and Rwandan peoples so closely."⁴⁶ The close ties between the two presidents seemed natural to Habyarimana's successor. On 17 April,

the president of the interim government, Théodore Sindikubwabo, wrote a long letter to the French head of state, “expressing the deepest thanks of the Rwandan people for the invaluable support [...] especially during the difficult moments following the aggression provoked in October 1990 by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) with the active support of the Ugandan government.”⁴⁷ This statement is noted by an exclamation point in the margin, where the Rwandan president points out that France prevented the “irreversible destabilization of Rwanda.” Théodore Sindikubwabo made an embarrassing request because he wanted France to replace Belgium within UNAMIR, against which he made heavy accusations: it was suspected of having helped, if not participated in the attack, and “it has been established that many elements of the Belgian contingent supported the RPF in the assaults against the Rwandan Armed Forces, in particular by placing heavy weapons and men at its disposal. The population claims that Belgian troops killed many innocent civilians,”⁴⁸ an accusation noted by the reader with a question mark. There is no indication that the French president read this letter, which was forwarded by the DAM to the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and from there to Bruno Delaye, but it was read closely. On 22 May, the president of the IRG wrote again to François Mitterrand: “I take the liberty of informing you [...]” While Alain Juppé denounced the genocide of the Tutsi on 16 May, Sindikubwabo expressed his satisfaction at having stopped the “inter-ethnic massacres” in the part of the country under government control and asked that France continue the aid it had been providing since 1990. “I appeal once again to your generous understanding and that of the French people, asking you to provide us once again with your material and diplomatic support.”⁴⁹ Even though President Sindikubwabo is in line with the continuity of Franco-Rwandan relations, he obscures the specificity of the situation and the new way in which France views the regime’s policy, as if personal relations were the only factor in the diplomatic and political game. The relationship between François Mitterrand and Juvénal Habyarimana was personal, not institutional; the unconditional support of the President of the French Republic cannot be passed on, especially in the new context of violence and

when the genocide is being denounced by the head of French diplomacy.

A decisive advantage in Rwanda

It is certain that President Habyarimana masters the advantage that his direct line to the President of the Republic gives him over his French interlocutors, both in Rwanda and during his meetings in Paris. He frequently insists on it, stages it, and uses it as a means of pressure to obtain decisions in his favor that he considers have already been decided by François Mitterrand. It is possible that Juvénal Habyarimana attributes choices or intentions to him that go beyond reality. However, nowhere in the archives consulted by the Commission is there any document that attests to the fact that the Rwandan president was disowned by his French counterpart. He perceived the potential power contained in the name of François Mitterrand and the possibility of claiming it, of invoking it. The example of the question of the extension of the Ruhengeri DAMI at the beginning of the summer of 1991 is symptomatic of this system, as Ambassador Martres explains, as he became obligated to his interlocutor:

The day after our meeting on 28 June (cf/ my TD 466), President Habyarimana telephoned me to insist once again on the need to extend the stay of the military assistance and training detachment in Ruhengeri, an extension he thought he had obtained from President Mitterrand on 23 April. Under these conditions, it seems to me desirable that the Ruhengeri DAMI not be abruptly withdrawn but maintained at least in part for an additional two months.⁵⁰

7.1.1.2 A PRESIDENTIAL POLICY APPROACH IN AFRICA
APPOINTMENTS AND PROMOTIONS IN THE ORDER OF
THE LEGION OF HONOR OF DIGNITARIES OF THE RWANDAN REGIME

The consultation of French archives on Rwanda has made it possible to identify certain dignitaries of the regime who were awarded the Legion of Honor. These marks of high distinction towards the representatives of the Kigali regime, especially President Habyarimana and those close to him, were massively granted by President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, "whose official visit to the Rwandan Republic"⁵¹ dates back to 18 May 1979. The dynamic continues, as shown by documents kept at the *Service historique de la Défense*. The Research

Commission wished to have access to the files of the decorated individuals that should exist at the Grande Chancellerie. It was not possible to obtain authorization to access these archives, given the deadline in submitting the Report and the delays of the investigation on the part of the Grand Chancellerie. This lack of cooperation, even though the Commission is acting within the framework of a mission entrusted to it by the President of the Republic, who is also Grand Master of the Order of the Legion of Honor, is regrettable. It is all the more regrettable that it prevented the Commission from accessing files validating the awarding of Rwandan decorations to French citizens, as required by the Legion of Honor Code.⁵² A “ceremony to award decorations to military personnel from the French military cooperation in Rwanda” was held on 28 June, 1991 at the Colonel-Mayuya camp, under the authority of President Habyarimana, Grand Master of the national orders, and in the presence of Colonels Serubuga and Rwagafilita, respectively Deputy Chief of Staff of the Rwandan army and Deputy Chief of Staff of the national gendarmerie. Twenty-six officers and men of the armed forces were decorated, some with the national order of the Mille Collines and others with the national order of peace.⁵³

It is still possible, however, thanks to the French archives consulted, to establish that Juvénal Habyarimana has been Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor since 8 July 1977.⁵⁴ Elie Sagatwa was promoted to Officer in 1977 and then to Commander on 7 October 1982.⁵⁵ Laurent Serubuga has also been a Commander since 19 December 1977.⁵⁶ A biographical notice from the *Centre d'Exploitation du Renseignements Militaire* (COIM) states that Pierre-Célestin Rwagafilita does not hold any French decoration,⁵⁷ but a document found in the diplomatic archives in Nantes gives him the rank of officer since 1979, along with Protais Zigiranyirazo.⁵⁸ These three figures would later become recognized Hutu extremists. The archives also record a ceremony organized in the presence of Bagosora, Sagatwa and Rusatira to award the Legion of Honor to Déogratias Nsabimana.⁵⁹ A moderate, Charles Uwihoreye, was also decorated. Without access to the archives of the Grand Chancellerie, the Research Commission was not able to verify whether a withdrawal procedure was applied to some of these figures, several of whom were members

of the “Zero network” or were heavily involved in the genocide.⁶⁰ The importance, number and quality of the distinctions reflect the attention of the two presidents of the Republic to the dignitaries of the Habyarimana regime. While Valéry Giscard d’Estaing’s personal involvement seems likely in view of the series of decorations awarded, François Mitterrand’s involvement is more difficult to estimate due to lack of access to sources. A valuable indicator is therefore out of reach. Other intentions, other vigilances are, on the other hand, better documented, in particular the requirement of absolute loyalty demanded of the ministers traditionally in charge of Africa, namely those of Cooperation and Development.

7.1.1.3 PRESIDENTIAL VIGILANCE OVER MINISTERS OF COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

During this period, two ministers of Cooperation showed signs of independence or even of distancing themselves from the policy followed, directly or indirectly calling François Mitterrand into question. The reaction was not long in coming. On 6 February, 1991, Jacques Pelletier, who was Minister of Cooperation in Michel Rocard’s government, sent him a personal letter:

Mr. President,

The evolution of Rwanda worries me more and more. President Habyarimana is not showing the signs of openness that he has been advised to show on several occasions.... Moreover, he is increasingly criticized even by some Hutus. The governmental changes seem to favour hard-line elements that are hostile to discussion with the rebels.

Mrs. Habyarimana and her clan have taken over...

If this development continues, I fear that the regime will not be able to hold out for very long. This raises the problem of our degree of involvement in this internal conflict. I am at your disposal to discuss this.

Jacques Pelletier.⁶¹

Preserved in the presidential fonds, the letter is accompanied by a handwritten note from François Mitterrand: “M. cl. P. give RV. FM.” The explanation obviously took place, as Jacques Pelletier then expressed no further reservations, neither public nor private - at least as far as the documentation goes.

The second incident concerns Minister Bernard Debré. Close

to both Édouard Balladur and François Mitterrand, the deputy of Indre-et-Loire and head of the department of the Cochin Hospital was appointed to rue Monsieur on 12 November, 1994, replacing Michel Roussin, who was forced to resign because of an indictment. An AFP dispatch of 19 November reports an interview of the new minister with RFI in which he declared, in particular, about French involvement in Rwanda, that “this policy is difficult to define for a relatively simple reason, that the Élysée and more particularly President Mitterrand is attached to the former Rwandan president Juvénal Habyarimana,” adding that he is “very attached to everything that was the former [Rwandan] regime.” For this reason, he concludes, “it is difficult to have a consensual policy.”⁶² He therefore announced that he had decided “to hold a meeting on Rwanda next week with all the political, social and economic actors on Rwanda. We are going to talk about it with the President (Mitterrand). I am bringing together the NGOs. A policy will be defined.”

The next day, Bernard Debré sent a handwritten letter to François Mitterrand, which should be quoted in full, since it invalidates his comments of the previous day and shows a strict alignment with the President’s positions. The insistence on RPF abuses, the minimization of anti-Tutsi massacres that were not qualified as genocide, the suspicion of the new regime and the temptation to put it under international supervision characterize the presidential line publicly affirmed at the Biarritz summit:

I would like to give you some details about my feelings towards Rwanda, elements that were badly transmitted by the AFP. President Habyarimana was the only one to have accepted agreements that could have brought peace to his country, but he was not able to apply them. At present, the abuses by the Hutu are well known, but those by the Tutsi are beginning to be legion and are being noted by NGOs. I have asked my advisors to meet to enlighten me on the situation. I think that the Arusha agreements should be revisited

- Certain conditionalities should be proposed*
 - UN observers could ensure that the abuses currently being denounced are stopped*
 - The return of refugees should be guaranteed by these same observers*
 - A broad-based government should represent all tendencies*
 - Elections should be proposed for Rwandans of all ethnicities within the next two to three years.*
-

- Justice, sitting to punish abuses, should be impartial Here, Mr. President, is my feeling on Rwanda.⁶³

The files of the Africa advisor do not contain a response to Bernard Debré's letter. On the other hand, a rather severe memo from Bruno Delaye, dated 9 December, 1994, signals a planned trip to Rwanda by the Minister, one week later, as part of a tour of Central Africa: "He should talk to you about it soon," the advisor writes to the President, adding:

It is clear from the first statements that Mr. Bernard Debré, sensitive to the arguments of the NGOs that are very critical of French policy in Rwanda, wishes to mark his difference and appear as the man of the normalization of our relations with the new authorities by being the first French minister to go to Kigali. The Rwandan government and the RPF, who have not failed to point out that Mr. Debré was more favorable to them than Mr. Juppé, will obviously welcome this planned visit. While General Kagame, on a trip to Europe and the United States, is multiplying his unpleasant statements about France, this visit to Rwanda by the Minister of Cooperation will be perceived by the Rwandan authorities as a victory and will probably not push them to make more concessions to promote national reconciliation and the return of the two million refugees camped on the country's borders.⁶⁴

Thus, on two occasions, it turns out that two Ministers of Cooperation and Development, tempted by the idea of a policy different from the one followed by the Élysée for Rwanda, are clearly rebuked by the head of state or his entourage. This practice of subjugating holders of strategic portfolios in Franco-African relations seems to be quite common. It is worth remembering that the Minister Delegate in charge of Cooperation in the first government of François Mitterrand's presidency, Jean-Pierre Cot, was forced to resign on 8 December, 1982, because he disagreed with François Mitterrand's policy. A 10 July, 1990 article in *Le Monde's* archives by Bruno Delaye recalls another episode in the tug-of-war between progressive diplomats and the Élysée power: "Un rapport à l'index" (A Blacklisted Report) by Jacques de Barrin evokes the stillborn fate of Stéphane Hessel's report, which was submitted to Prime Minister Michel Rocard in 1990.⁶⁵

7.1.1.4 A PRESENT/ABSENT SECRETARY GENERAL

Hubert Védrine was advisor on strategic issues and disarmament to the President of the Republic from May 1988 to May 1991, before succeeding Jean-Louis Bianco as Secretary General. He was the recipient of all the memos addressed to the President of the Republic on Rwanda and the Great Lakes region, produced by the private staff and the Africa Advisor. He annotates them, indicates that they have been seen by the head of state, and communicates the latter's instructions to the two services in charge of the subject. These are often just a few words. Memos from the president to his advisors are rare or even non-existent. François Mitterrand expressed himself in the margins of his advisors' memos, during meetings that left no written trace, through letters to the Prime Minister or to ministers, during the restricted defense councils when they were established in February 1993. Hubert Védrine, on the other hand, produced memos, addressed to François Mitterrand, but also, in the name of the President, to exterior figures.⁶⁶ During Operation Turquoise, the President of the Republic of Rwanda was the only person to have a written record. During Operation Turquoise, the activity of the Secretary General was steady, as the archives of the presidential collection show.⁶⁷

On 15 June, 1994, he submitted to the President "a list of specific actions that France could carry out in Rwanda (protection of hospitals or other)." On 22 June, he sent a letter to Daniel Jacoby, President of the FIDH, in reaction to the questioning, "in extremely partisan and violent terms," of "France's policy in Rwanda over the last few years and since the tragedy that has brought bloodshed to that country." He refers to the two communiqués of Saturday, 18 June. Probably on 26 June, he wrote a handwritten memo to the President of the Republic to point out the problem posed by General Quesnot's request to accompany the Minister of Defense to Zaire and Rwanda: "Journalists are too familiar with his very anti-RPF positions."⁶⁸ The memos of 27 June and 15 July concern initiatives by Édouard Balladur; the second, of 15 July, reacting to a Reuters dispatch announcing the arrests of genocide leaders: "President's Reading. This is not what was said by the Prime Minister. Hubert Védrine." The memo of 11 August, 1994 concerns the withdrawal of the 850 French soldiers still present in Rwanda.

Hubert Védrine is active on the subject at a time when Rwanda and the French intervention are of great concern to the President of the Republic, particularly in an exercise where the Prime Minister is in the lead. The subject is also attracting the attention of the French and foreign media. Previously, the Secretary General has taken an interest in the Arusha Accords because of his experience and diplomatic skills. He is perceived as the authority to whom information about Rwanda must reach. Thus, on 29 January, 1993, he received a report from the chief of staff of the Minister of Economy and Finance on a French financial mission that had returned from Kigali and noted “a profound deterioration in the situation [...] this requires the rapid conclusion of the Arusha negotiations.”⁶⁹

7.1.1.5 TWO DEPARTMENTS OF THE ÉLYSÉE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL DECISION: THE PERSONAL MILITARY STAFF AND THE AFRICA UNIT

As President of the Republic and head of state, François Mitterrand had a civilian and military cabinet whose members he met on a daily basis, with whom he made his official trips, and whose memos he read and commented on via the Secretary General,⁷⁰ who assumed the tasks of regulating the Élysée machine. With the EMP, the proximity is even stronger because of the responsibility of this service charged with maintaining the availability of nuclear weapons for the president at all times and in all places. For this reason, it is the EMP that ensures all his communications when the President is on a trip in France or abroad. The chief of the personal military staff is Admiral Jacques Lanxade, who arrived in this position on 17 April, 1989 and left it on 24 April, 1991 to take over the head of the Armed Forces Staff. He was replaced by General Quesnot.⁷¹ Colonel (now Brigadier General) Jean-Pierre Huchon ensured the continuity of the monitoring of the Army. Appointed deputy of the EMP in 1989, he left 14 rue de l'Élysée in 1993 to succeed General Jean Varret, who had been ousted from military cooperation.

François Mitterrand attached great importance to the Africa Unit. It was located at 2 rue de l'Élysée in the former offices of Jacques Foccart. In 1986, he appointed his own son, Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, to head it. He had no particular expertise in the subject or in diplomatic matters. His main quality was his proximity to

the head of state and his experience, acquired between 1983 and 1986 when he was assistant to Guy Penne in this position, officially entitled advisor for African affairs. Ambassador Bruno Delaye succeeded him and took as his deputy another career diplomat, Dominique Pin, who was first counselor at the French Embassy in Kinshasa.

For Rwanda in particular, Africa in general, and the French-speaking bloc of countries known as “the field,” the main tasks carried out by these two poles of military and diplomatic advice were the drafting of memos of one to two pages addressed “to the attention of the President,” under cover of the Secretary General of the Presidency of the Republic. The archives of the presidential fonds preserve them, although it is not possible to certify that the collection is complete insofar as there is no formal record in a “chrono.”⁷² These memos are the result of a synthesis of all kinds of information, of the presentation of situations and of proposals for solutions. It is therefore very important to be able to access the raw documents that made it possible to draw up these memos. The Bruno Delaye archives preserve them, unlike the EMP archives. The archives of Jean-Christophe Mitterrand cannot be found. The memos of the EMP, as well as those of the Africa Unit, reach the President, as attested by the “seen” written in his hand, often accompanied by his initials, or “President’s reading” written in the pen of the Secretary General.

The study of French policies in Rwanda has revealed both the hold of the EMP on the Africa unit, its production of memos, and the irregular activity of 14 rue de l’Élysée - facts that are noted and analyzed in a separate section of this chapter. These observations and analyses highlight the responsibility of the politician in this autonomy of the services. Covered by the president without necessarily being informed of all the ins and outs of this autonomy, the EMP gives itself a power of action over Rwanda that exceeds its advisory functions.

7.1.1.6 THE EMP AT THE CENTER OF PRESIDENTIAL DECISION-MAKING

Under the Fifth Republic, the President’s staff is placed under the authority of the Chief of the Personal Military Staff (CEMP), a member of the President’s cabinet and second in

the order of protocol of the Presidency of the Republic after the Secretary General. He is assisted by senior officers from each army and attached to joint services. This institution acts as a staff whose role is to act as an interface between the President of the Republic and the various armed forces, and to advise the head of state in his role as head of the armed forces. It is also in charge of the operational permanence of the nuclear deterrent forces. It prepares the defense councils and is in charge of the liaison with the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces General Staff (EMA). The documents made available to the Commission's researchers are the series of memos to the President of the Republic on Rwanda, taken from the set of documents under the reference AG/5(4)/12456. There are other memos on various contemporary international crises which do not appear in the excerpts made available to the Commission. These memos are regularly cited, piecemeal, in books, tribunes, press articles and even websites dealing with France's role in Rwanda. The interest of this systematic and unpublished analysis was to bring together these documents in a coherent series allowing for a detailed analysis as well as a contextualization of each of these memos in their archival environment and in their context. They allow an analysis, over time, of the role played by the CEMP in the decision-making process concerning the nature of French interventions in Rwanda. Chronologically, the dynamics of production can be represented in the form of a table:

Years	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	Total
Number of memos produced by the EMP	13	13	11	10	30	77

Between 1990 and 1993, the number of EMP memos remained stable on an annual scale, while in 1994 the number tripled. The annual scale is unsatisfactory, however, because it does not allow us to observe intermediate variations. By refining the analysis, this time to the monthly level, it is possible to observe fluctuations:

The production of EMP memos follows the chronology of the crises in Rwanda and of the various interventions by France.⁷³ Three periods can be identified:

- The initial period of the French intervention in Rwanda and the installation of its mechanism. It covers the months from October 1990 to the end of the first half of 1991.

- An intermediate period from January 1992 to April 1993, with a final surge in October, where the memos transcribe the different French reactions to the successive crises in Rwanda until the disengagement of its mechanism. It is quite remarkable that no memos are produced, filed, or kept concerning the second half of 1991, nor during the late spring and summer of 1993.

- The “climax” period from April to August 1994, from the beginning of the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda until the end of Operation Turquoise. The absence of any memo produced, deposited or kept in this fond concerning the period January to April 1994 is noteworthy.

7.1.1.7. A ONE-HEADED EXECUTIVE?

PRIME MINISTERS AND RWANDA

Between 1990 and 1994, Michel Rocard, Édith Cresson, Pierre Bérégovoy and Édouard Balladur alternated as prime ministers. The first two are almost absent from the subject or only approach it retrospectively. The systematic examination of Michel Rocard’s archives, for the period he spent at Matignon, shows the total absence of any involvement. He was only concerned with the subject retrospectively, as his private archives show, especially when he was first secretary of the Socialist Party in 1993. Shortly after participating in a conference for Médecins du Monde at the beginning of 1993, where he seems to have been questioned on the issue, he ordered - as proof of his interest and his ignorance of the question - a memo on Rwanda from his former advisor at Matignon for geostrategic questions, Marisol Touraine. The latter inquired at the Quai d’Orsay, and sent him the following text:

Following your intervention at the symposium organized by Médecins du Monde, you asked me for a memo on Rwanda. You will find attached the analysis that the Quai d’Orsay has sent me. I think it would be useful to draw your attention to the following points, which inform the former Prime Minister of the problems posed by French policy in Rwanda and the reasons for such a strong commitment to the Habyarimana regime:

- Rwanda is experiencing one of the most confused situations in Africa. Three

problems overlap: the ethnic problem of the confrontation between the Hutu and the Tutsi; the democratic problem, as the majority Hutu have monopolized power since 1959 and the process of political openness initiated by President Habyarimana in 1990 has remained very limited; and finally, the regional problem, with English-speaking Uganda supporting the Tutsi opposition against the French-speaking Rwandan regime, and the Rwandan community in Uganda having itself largely favored the installation of the Museveni regime.

- France de facto took over from Belgium in Rwanda about ten years ago. Above all, F. Mitterrand had a "crush" on Habyarimana, in whom he saw a potential democrat: the unanimous opinion is that he is undoubtedly a "jovial and charming" (sic) man; his democratic feelings, on the other hand, are more in doubt. The appropriateness of our political involvement in Rwanda is much debated: there is no doubt that it is the Élysée, and it alone, that has weighed in this direction. That said, it cannot be denied that by appointing an opposition Prime Minister in April 1992, Habyarimana seemed to embody a democratic hope, which has now been dashed.

- The sending of our troops to Rwanda, some 28 months ago, was decided by the Élysée alone. The initial objective was the security of French and Belgian expatriates. It quickly became support for the Habyarimana regime, and French soldiers participated in operations against the rebels. Today, the French presence is unanimously opposed. This is why Paris has just asked that the baton be taken up by UN peacekeepers and hopes to be able to get out very quickly. Great Britain is reluctant and does not help us much.

In short, Rwanda is a complicated case both because of its internal situation and because of the motivations of the policy that France is pursuing there. It is not illegitimate to detect in it, at least in part, traces of support for a non-democratic regime, even if this one has the particularity of having embodied, for a few months, the hope of democratic progress.⁷⁴

Subsequently, Rwanda reappeared in Michel Rocard's preoccupations, but after 1994, when he led a mission to Rwanda in 1997.

Edith Cresson, who succeeded him, does not seem to have been involved in Rwandan affairs either, if we are to believe the absence of any trace of it in the archives consulted. The few times she mentions the subject, it is to refer her interlocutor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. For example, the archives of her private secretary's office show that, among the ten thousand or so letters, there is a request from two politicians: Georges Colombier, deputy of Isère, vice-president of the General Council and mayor of Meyrieu-les-Étangs, and André Borel, deputy of Vaucluse, also

vice-president of the General Council and mayor of Pertuis. They brought up a request made by the French Committee for the Defense of Human Rights and Democracy in Rwanda, and in particular by Jean Carbonare. His secretariat sent them this reply in the accepted style for this kind of exchange:

Mr. Deputy.

You have kindly drawn my attention to the approach made to you by the French Committee for the Defense of Human Rights and Democracy in Rwanda.

I have taken careful note of the situation mentioned by Mr. Jean Carbonare.

Sensitive to the concerns expressed by the individual, I immediately forwarded this correspondence to Mr. Roland Dumas, Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs, asking him to provide you with information that would respond to the questions raised by your interlocutor.⁷⁵

Pierre Bérégovoy was more active on the file, even if his participation was limited to being informed, more than his predecessors, of the intentions of the Élysée. This was reflected in the production of several successive memos, with traces found in the advisors' archives. They are not memos calling for decisions, but information. One of them shows that this involvement of the Prime Minister was directly desired by the Élysée. Thus, a meeting was organized in September 1992 between Pierre Bérégovoy and the Prime Minister of Rwanda, which was a clear reversal of the policy followed until then. His diplomatic advisor Jean-Claude Cousseran writes that "this audience, which would not have been necessary in any other context, is now considered very opportune, both at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at the African unit of the Élysée."⁷⁶ It "is important" because:

It can only strengthen Mr. Nsengiyareme, a member of the moderate opposition to President Habyarimana, who is in charge of a delicate political transition that sometimes brings him up against the presidential will. It is therefore part of our action to consolidate the policy of openness in Rwanda. It comes a few days before an important meeting. The discussions held by the Rwandan authorities with the Rwandan Patriotic Front in Arusha, which led to the signing of a memorandum of understanding on the rule of law on 18 August, are due to enter a decisive phase on 7 September, with negotiations on power sharing and the formation of a national army with the absorption of rebel elements. Thanks to

*the reinforcement of our military cooperation, the situation on the ground is currently frozen, but we have a vested interest in a political solution and thus in the success of the Arusha negotiations.*⁷⁷

However, the Prime Minister was not asked to comment on the substance of French policy in Rwanda, but to consolidate, through his involvement, which was only symbolic, that followed by the Élysée and the Africa Unit. His advisor, Jacques Maire, attended several crisis units in February 1993, but Pierre Bérégovoy's decision was never formally required, except when it was a question of supporting the positions of the President of the Republic, particularly in a core cabinet meeting.⁷⁸

The cohabitation allowed the cards to be reshuffled, since Édouard Balladur wanted, and obtained, a greater capacity to act and influence French policy in Rwanda. Unlike his predecessors, who belonged to the majority of the President of the Republic, Édouard Balladur came from the right and carried a project that, as we saw in Chapter 5, was more cautious about French involvement in Rwanda, and even broke with France's traditional policy in Africa since decolonization, particularly on economic and financial issues. However, it is clear that in July 1994, he was at the heart of the decision-making process. This is evident, of course, in his trip to Rwanda, but also in the memos from the EMP which - in a twist of fate - inform the President of the Republic of the decisions taken by his Prime Minister. This point is particularly noteworthy in the memos of General Quesnot, who informs us that it was at Matignon that the meeting on Rwanda was held on 15 and 18 July 1994, chaired by the Prime Minister, who "asks," "considers," "is ready to accept" or "excludes" what French policy should be towards the situation in Rwanda.⁷⁹

7.1.2 Harassed ministries

The period of cohabitation did not only bring the two heads of the executive branch into conflict over the Rwanda issue. This issue also affects relations between ministries and relations between ministries and the presidency of the Republic through conflicts that can take an exacerbated turn. This situation is not limited to the time of

cohabitation. From 1991 and especially in 1992 and 1993, Rwanda became an issue in the relations between the Joxe Ministry of Defense on the one hand, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Élysée on the other. François Léotard, who succeeded Pierre Joxe,⁸⁰ faced similar hostilities. The Ministry of Cooperation also came under severe attack throughout the period, its civilian and military policies appearing to be an obstacle to the aims of the Élysée, but also to the modernization efforts of both the Ministry of Defense (for military cooperation) and the Treasury (for civilian cooperation). The confrontations between departments can be ruthless.

7.1.2.1 MINISTER JOXE'S OPPOSITION TO THE ÉLYSÉAN POLICY

Pierre Joxe, who succeeded Jean-Pierre Chevènement as Minister of Defense on 29 January 1991, left the Hôtel de Brienne on 9 March 1993. He opposed the Élysée's policy in Rwanda on three levels: first, on the substance, through letters addressed to the President of the Republic calling for France's military disengagement, particularly because of the absence of serious political guarantees with President Habyarimana.⁸¹ Rwanda also revealed the serious dysfunctions of the military-diplomatic decision-making process at the Élysée: Pierre Joxe tried, in vain, to reform a system that he was not far from thinking was problematic in terms of the republican practice of institutions. Finally, he aspired to give the Ministry of Defense the means of its independence as well as its authority, especially with respect to Foreign Affairs or the Armed Forces Staff. The creation of the Delegation for Strategic Affairs (DAS), the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DRM), and the Special Operations Command (COS) respond to these imperatives.

Through his chief of staff François Nicoullaud, Minister Joxe solemnly warned his counterpart Roland Dumas of the risks of the French policy then being followed in Rwanda.⁸² He even insisted on an essential point in the arguments of the authorities in charge of the dossier, namely that military support was the key to the solution in Rwanda. However, according to this memo, this is not the case. This policy leads to a dead end, because the political solution is absent:

The deployment of Operation Noroît and the establishment of a DAMI, while they have stabilized the military situation, have not been enough to restore it definitively. In fact, the situation has been deteriorating significantly for several weeks. The sending of a French observer mission (MOF) to the Ugandan-Rwandan border has not produced the expected results. In the absence of a political solution, there is a risk that the French military will be bogged down in Rwanda. I believe it is necessary to draw your attention to this situation. The current crisis could, in the long run, destabilize the entire Great Lakes sub-region. I would be grateful if you could tell me whether the Ministry of Defense would be in favor of an interministerial consultation on this country.⁸³

In view of the worsening situation, the proposal of the Minister of Defense to open the discussion at the interministerial level clearly responds to the need to address the Rwandan issue within the framework of regular institutions and to get it out of an opaque and irregular management. The response from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, written by his chief of staff,⁸⁴ agreed to this proposal for “interministerial consultation” but immediately stated a position that was radically opposed to that of the Minister of Defense. In contrast to disengagement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs advocated reinforcement: “France seems to have no other solution than to increase its support, in particular military support, to the Government of Rwanda.”

A year later, Pierre Joxe failed in a new confrontation, this time directly with the presidency of the Republic, where the Élysée controlled the decision on Rwanda. On 19 February, he sent a memo to the President of the Republic contesting the logic of increasing military aid to Rwanda while recognizing the difficulty of the situation. He challenged the supremacy of the Quai d’Orsay in matters of strategic decision making and asked that the President of the Republic make a clear and meaningful decision.⁸⁵

Should we send these two additional companies immediately, as a sign of our determination?

- If we clearly announce that they are there to evacuate the expatriates, their arrival will push for this evacuation and accelerate the decomposition of the regime.

- If we leave ambiguity about the meaning of this move, the Rwandan presidency will not fail to present it as support by France.

I believe that this issue, which is monitored daily by the interministerial “crisis unit” at the Quai d’Orsay, should now be

*examined under your presidency. For my part, I remain convinced that we must confine ourselves strictly to the protection of our nationals.*⁸⁶

Following this memo, and on the same day, came the reply from the Élysée, which was a bitter disavowal for the minister as well as a demonstration of the power of the EMP. General Quesnot informed the head of the Minister of Defense's military cabinet of the President of the Republic's decision to "send two additional companies to Rwanda as a matter of urgency in order to ensure the immediate security of our nationals and, if necessary, of other expatriates."⁸⁷ Refusing to concede defeat, Pierre Joxe sent a new memo to François Mitterrand, dated 26 February, 1993.⁸⁸ The latter insists even more than the previous one on the trap of French involvement in Rwanda, where the main partner is not forced to make any political concessions. It bears a heavy responsibility in what the minister calls a "current fiasco" and it compromises those who blindly support the Rwandan president. Pierre Joxe advances "the possibility of our disengagement":

*As for Habyarimana, the sending of two additional companies, after many other demonstrations of support, makes him feel that he is now one of the African leaders best protected by France. This is not the best way to get him to make the necessary concessions. However, his political intransigence and his inability to mobilize his own army are largely responsible for the current fiasco.*⁸⁹

In the meantime, the Minister, through his chief of staff, sent a memo to his counterpart at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 6 August, 1992 on the "application of the cease-fire agreement in Rwanda."⁹⁰

In conclusion, I urgently request your instructions as to what to do on the three points in question:

- 1. supply, or not, of military equipment ;*
- 2. maintenance military cooperants (volume, status)*
- 3. whether or not to maintain the two Noroît companies.*

Dominique Girard, deputy director of the cabinet of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, replied on 12 August 1992. He refused to suspend supplies, ordered the integration of

DAMI personnel into the military cooperants' status in order to avoid the clauses of the Arusha agreements, and refused to immediately reduce *Noroît*.⁹¹ Despite his firmness with the *Élysée* and the pressure he exerted on the *Quai d'Orsay*, Pierre Joxe obtained only very partial results, which were quickly reversed or cancelled. The Ministry of Defense was forced to execute in Rwanda. Thus, a memo dated 19 June 1992 from François Nicoullaud granted everything the Rwandans asked for, following the visit of a "joint mission of officers from the Armed Forces Staff and the Ministry for Cooperation and Development."⁹²

The aggression of the Ministry of Defense continued during the cohabitation, proof of the structural nature of EMP practices. For all that, countering the EMP meant opposing the President of the Republic. As for the EMA, it limits itself to a cautious reserve.

7.1.2.2 FRANÇOIS LÉOTARD'S MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OF

The arrival of François Léotard at the Ministry of Defense, on 30 March 1993, revived the hostility of certain military institutions to the *Hôtel de Brienne*. The latter would not have acted on their own initiative if they had not been pressured by the *Élysée* on the one hand, and by the *Quai d'Orsay* on the other, which, like the EMP, was always very hostile to the ministry resulting from Pierre Joxe's reforms. In such a context of confrontation, François Léotard had experienced and solid advisors.

The deputy diplomatic advisor in charge of the dossier, the diplomat Laurent Bili, attached to the civilian cabinet, demanded joint working meetings with the military cabinet by convening the EMA, as was the case on 21 June 1993. The meeting was intended to "provide the following clarifications concerning the current viewpoint of the Ministry of Defense on the future of our presence in Rwanda. Colonels Rigot and Delort were present." Laurent Bili summarized: "For us, it is a question of avoiding seeing the legitimate government of a French-speaking State deposed by force; of gradually disengaging ourselves by involving the UN and the OAU as much as possible, in order to safeguard the work that we have accomplished."⁹³ Achieving the first objective, however, in no way implies postponing or delaying the

French disengagement. However, the Ministry would like assurances regarding the political future of Rwanda: “After the effective entry into force⁹⁴ of the Arusha Agreements, Panda will no longer have a reason to exist in its current missions. Moreover, it is not conceivable to maintain the presence of this DAMI once the Noroît mechanism has been withdrawn.”⁹⁵ This last clarification is important in light of the maneuvers, both in Kigali at Habyarimana’s office and in Paris at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to ensure the continuity of the DAMI by giving its personnel the status of “cooperants”/military technical advisors (which would allow them to get out of the clauses under discussion in the Arusha agreements). The intervention of the deputy director of the cabinet of the Quai, on 12 August 1992, quoted above, illustrated this. Head of the military cabinet of the Minister of Defense, Air Force General Jean Rannou, a former fighter pilot, ensured that the arrangements were in order. On 6 April he sent his minister a very firm memo on the subject, at the end of a crisis unit meeting held the same day. Reading his remarks, one can measure the strength of the warlike tendencies and the extent of the divisions within the executive. General Rannou’s analysis has the merit of clarity:

1. - *Mr. de La Sablière, Africa Director, gave a presentation of the situation. He felt that the strong diplomatic measures decided last week in a core cabinet meeting had bought time, but that the risk of an RPF offensive had not been ruled out (cf. memo by General Fruchard).*
2. - *After discussion, it appeared that it was preferable to continue to put pressure on Ugandan President Museveni rather than enter into dialogue with the RPF, as the latter seems to want.*
3. - *In response to the question of whether the various military assistance and training detachments (MATDs) could be increased from 50 to 75 personnel, the Director of the Cabinet of the Minister of Cooperation requested that this discussion take place among the ministers concerned. You must address this point because it would not be consistent to plan for a reinforcement of 1,400 men and refuse 25 additional cooperants, when their mission is to avoid the commitment of 1,400.*
4. - *In the specific case of the deployment of our troops, several of the participants think that the decision to use force is automatic; I do not share this point of view, the decision to use force must be clearly formulated at the level of the Prime Minister and the President of the Republic.⁹⁶*

General Rannou’s memo is, in its tone, firm and uncompromising, symptomatic of a case where obscurity and irregularities are frequent. It also attests to the PM-PR co-sovereignty over the

Rwandan dossier. Finally, it reveals that mistrust of the RPF continues to run deep and that the hand extended by the movement is rejected.

After 4 August, 1993, the implementation of the agreements and the withdrawal of the French mechanism were closely monitored by the Hôtel de Brienne, probably to avoid any temptation to keep French elements outside the Arusha framework. On 16 November, in a memo to the Prime Minister, Cabinet Director François Lépine firmly emphasized “the successive stages in the settlement of the Rwandan crisis; these are in order”:

- *the setting up of a neutral international force in Kigali,*
- *the departure of the French detachment responsible for ensuring the security of foreign nationals residing in Kigali*
- *the establishment of a transitional government with an expanded base.*⁹⁷

Prefect Lépine specified that the arrival of a first Belgian element of the international force, “superior in number to the French detachment, allows us to envisage the withdrawal of our forces from 1 December. This operation would initially be carried out towards Bangui, using the air assets usually present in Central Africa. Once the decision has been taken, the execution time will be of the order of a few days. It would be desirable for the Prime Minister to be able to speak with the President of the Republic as soon as possible.”⁹⁸

Faced with the Élysée, uncertain about the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, the Minister of Defense relied resolutely on his civilian and military cabinet and, within it, on the reserved bureau (BR). This small unit run by special forces officers was responsible, on behalf of the Minister, for establishing contacts with the RPF representative in Europe, including Jacques Bihozagara based in Brussels, and for investigating those responsible for the genocide.⁹⁹ The BR also organized, with the DRM, the urgent trip to Rwanda, with the military leader of the movement Paul Kagame, of the advisor Jean-Christophe Rufin, accompanied by the CNRS researcher Gérard Prunier, at the beginning of July 1994, in the middle of Operation Turquoise. During Operation Turquoise, the BR received information from the PCIAT in Goma faxed to Paris, such as “transcripts of Radio Mille Collines broadcasts.”¹⁰⁰

7.1.2.3 COOPERATION UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND THE EMP

In October 1990, when the RPF offensive against Rwanda was launched, which would lead to a considerable commitment by France in that country until 1994, General Jean Varret commanded the military cooperation mission that supervised all military cooperation that France maintained with the countries known as “the field,” i.e. under the responsibility of the Ministry for Cooperation. In this capacity, France maintains military cooperation with Rwanda. This cooperation is primarily centered on training advice for the Rwandan gendarmerie, but also on technical support concerning the use of helicopters and armored vehicles. The “October 1990 war” was to initiate a new form of military cooperation aimed at giving the Rwandan regime the means to avoid collapse in the face of the RPF and then, in 1992, to negotiate peace under favorable conditions. Because it is both the military command of the cooperation elements and the central administration responsible for proposing a military assistance policy, the MMC is gradually finding itself in a problematic situation: it must respond to urgent political orders dictated by current events and to a timetable that is not controlled by France. At the same time, it must monitor the effectiveness and relevance of French military cooperation projects with Rwanda. Thus, the MMC appears to be an obstacle to the policy that the Élysée wants to conduct, in full sovereignty, in Rwanda.

The location of the DAMI Panda and Rwandan pressure

The decision to deploy a DAMI Panda to reinforce the capabilities of certain elite Rwandan military units was taken between January and March 1991, to be implemented in April of the same year (Chapter 2 and Chapter 3). This DAMI, armed essentially by operators from the 1st RPIMa, became the main instrument of French military cooperation in Rwanda, apart from the massive supply of arms and the deterrent force represented by Noroît. Its initial geographical location, in Ruhengeri, placed it at the center of the main Rwandan military apparatus,

but at a relatively good distance from the northern front. The DAMI is thus close to concentrations of FAR units without risking accidental involvement in the fighting, and without being far from French nationals residing outside the Kigali region - their protection being the pretext for justifying the increased military aid given to President Habyarimana. Habyarimana never ceased to press for such resources, knowing they would strengthen his power, which was increasingly weakened by internal dissent and RPF offensives. He insisted on locating the DAMI within range of the front line. By first requesting the relocation of the DAMI from Ruhengeri to Mukamira, the Rwandan authorities attempted an initial pressure. This request was rejected until the autumn of 1991, when it was finally accepted against the advice of the EMA's employment division and the MMC: "General Varret, who knows the area well, is not in favor of this detachment and believes that training can continue in Ruhengeri under the current conditions."¹⁰¹

The risks of French involvement in the fighting were too high and the rationale of protecting French nationals was wearing thin.¹⁰² But the insistence of the Rwandan authorities, notably relayed by Colonel Cussac, the defense attaché,¹⁰³ won the decision. In this acceptance, we find the weight of the high-level bilateral relationship between France and Rwanda, which makes it possible to overturn the opinions of the French administrations and staffs. The same mechanism was used when, in the autumn of 1991, the Rwandan authorities requested the detachment of a DAMI group to the Gabiro site in the north-east of the country, close to the front line with the RPF: initially refused by the MMC, the detachment was decided upon by Admiral Lanxade at the end of December 1991 during his visit to Rwanda. As early as 13 June, the army staff tried to impose "three DAMI 1st RPIMa Kigali precursors" as part of the EFAO relief operation in the CAR. On the message from "Guerre Paris" (Paris War) received by the MMC, General Varret wrote: "I phoned EMAT/EMPLOI to say that we did not agree to the 3 precursors of the 1st RPIMa. This made Colonel Galinié jump!"¹⁰⁴

The Ministry of Cooperation lost another arbitration, one year later, concerning "the establishment of a French technical advisor, a deputy defense attaché." On 10 April, 1992, an "aide-mémoire"

from an inter-ministerial “Africa” meeting held the day before explained the decision taken in this regard, mentioning that it had been made “despite the opposition of the Ministry of Cooperation, which considered Colonel Serubuga, CEMGA, to be a dangerous man.”¹⁰⁵ The dangerousness of this extremist Hutu soldier was known to General Varret, in particular since Colonel Galinié’s end-of-mission message,¹⁰⁶ and, as he was personally informed, to the Rwandan Gendarmerie chief of staff.¹⁰⁷ The decision to assign a senior French officer to a “dangerous man” was therefore taken with full knowledge of the facts. However, the priority objective was the submission of the Ministry of Cooperation and the head of the military cooperation mission. In retrospect, one can measure the tragic consequences of this type of purely functional choice, driven by internal institutional conflicts. The decision taken led to the strengthening of the extremist clan of the regime surrounding the Rwandan head of state, as Colonel Galinié established in his end-of-mission message of 19 June, 1991.¹⁰⁸

The Varret report of 27 May, 1992: criticism of unlimited cooperation

General Varret’s report of 27 May, 1992, which is analyzed in detail in Chapter 2, makes a critical diagnosis of French military cooperation with Rwanda. Noting the inflation of the means granted and the weakness of the results obtained, he established the need for a cooperation policy that would not be based solely on military aid. In his report, General Varret emphasized the extent to which the response to even urgent requests made by the authorities (the Rwandan president and prime minister) for additional cooperation should not be granted immediately but should, on the contrary, await a French political decision. Through this gesture, which could be considered dilatory, he gives back to the French political power the possibility to make the choices that are its responsibility. This logic, which aims to give back to the political power the choice of its policy, is still at work in the document he wrote for the Minister of Cooperation on 6 April 1993. In the context of renewed tension between the FAR and the RPF, he asked for an increase in the resources of DAMI Panda, i.e., an increase in the number of de facto advisors who assist the FAR. While advising the Minister not to

refuse this increase of 25 personnel, General Varret proposed that coordination between the EMA and Cooperation be re-launched to define their framework of employment. He therefore suggested that his minister take the time to reflect on the matter without opposing the principle. At the same time, he also repositioned the EMA as a central player in defining the use of French military co-operants. This requires a precise knowledge of the field, involving on-site missions.

Colonel Capodanno, General Varret's deputy, visited Rwanda from 3 to 6 November 1992. He noted that the efforts requested by the Rwandan partner "apply primarily to trainings that should be little affected by the coming deflation and in which it will be difficult to integrate RPF elements: this is the case of the Gendarmerie, the Para Battalion and the Ruhengeri Battalion, which, as its name indicates, is composed of people from this region, the stronghold of President Habyarimana," concluding that there were "some ulterior motives"¹⁰⁹ on the part of the Rwandan authorities. The colonel also opened up to his superior about the problem of the Presidential Guard, which also benefits from a DAMI:

The Presidential Guard is criticized. It is criticized for its participation in destabilizing the opposition. We have planned to eliminate the DAM of 2 non-commissioned officers and to transform the CEN n... into an advisor position in the Mobile Group. That is, to cease our activities in favor of the Presidential Guard. This decision could be reviewed in the spring of 1993, depending on political developments in Rwanda.¹¹⁰

This desire on the part of General Varret to ensure that the posting of development co-operants to a particularly sensitive country remained both a political choice and a controlled operation, met with strong opposition within the government. Clarifications are demanded. The office of the Minister of Cooperation spoke out on the subject and was alarmist about the policy in Rwanda. A memo to the Minister summarized the situation at the end of the Africa meeting of 9 April, 1992.¹¹¹ It is very explicit on the risks of French involvement, on the involvement of the President of the Republic, and on the warnings that the authorities may receive:

The Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs would like to see a strengthening of our military assistance to Rwanda to help the government counter the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). For this, they wish, with the government, that we take charge of: - a military advisor to the

President of the Republic and an “operations” military advisor to the general staff; - night combat support equipment.

Do we need to get more involved in this conflict when our military presence is already misunderstood and misinterpreted? This ministry believes that the answer must be no unless the option of unwavering support for President Habyarimana is reconfirmed by the President of the Republic. In the absence of such a decision and of confirmation of the process of democratic opening, it does not seem advisable to us: 1/ to assign a military cooperant to an army commanded by a chief of staff whose methods we cannot endorse; 2/ to reinforce the means of night combat when the main cause of government defeats lies in the lack of will of the troops to fight in these circumstances; 3/ to acquire highly sophisticated and extremely expensive equipment¹¹² out of proportion to our means and which would require a significant introduction, that the equipment be served by French military assistants.¹¹³

This last and strong reluctance refers to the training activity of a CRAP platoon within the Para battalion. In his report of November 1992, after the Africa meeting of 9 April, Colonel Capodanno describes the training course. These were the missions that the Ministry of Cooperation was contesting. We can therefore deduce that the President of the Republic, via General Quesnot who had already intervened for the Gonio station, had given his agreement. It is explicitly mentioned in the training program: “Combat. J + N.”¹¹⁴ Two sessions were planned in Bigogwe, from 30 November to 30 December and from 4 to 30 January, 1993. The remark of the office of the Minister of Cooperation on the real needs of the Rwandan army is essential:

Purpose of the course. To give the CRAP platoon of the Para battalion the ability to intervene with all or part of its means, beyond the enemy lines or within its mechanism to inform. Harass or destroy. Its teams’ modes of action can be inspired by conventional warfare, but also by guerrilla warfare, counter-guerrilla warfare and even clandestine warfare.¹¹⁵

The DAMI Génie of October 1992: the refusal of a poorly thought-out cooperation

The implementation of the DAMI Génie in October 1992, documented in Chapter 2, illustrates a case of refusal on the part of the head of the military cooperation mission and his circumvention to set up this training system against his will. The choice of such a DAMI was decided, according to the sources, by General Quesnot, Chief of the

Private Staff of the President of the Republic, during a meeting with the Rwandan President in Kigali between 13 and 14 October. This led the EMA's employment division to take written note on 5 November, 1990, that the dispatch of this DAMI was a decision of the Chief of Staff. Its deployment must be surrounded by "all the discretion that is appropriate in a period of negotiations."¹¹⁶ The defense attaché, following the Military Cooperation Mission, raised the difficulties that training the FAR too close to the Front would create.¹¹⁷

The speed of implementation of the DAMI Genie is remarkable. In retrospect, it can probably be explained by a decision taken at the highest level, but also in response to a specific Rwandan request. By comparison, the implementation of the DAMI Panda takes several months. Thus, the idea of a DAMI, instead of a parachute company, was raised as early as January 1991 as part of a strategy to lighten the French military presence in Rwanda. The arrival of the French soldiers took several months and required regular meetings to refine the objectives and missions assigned to the DAMI. The first DAMI soldiers were not operational in the field until April 1991.

In 1993, General Varret, as head of the MMC, suffered another blow when a report from the defense attaché - and head of the MAM in Kigali under his authority - sent the Armed Forces chief of staff a detailed report on the evacuation of French and Western expatriates from the town of Ruhengeri from 8 to 11 February. This was Operation "Volcan." Colonel Cussac attached "proposals for awards." In a handwritten memo accompanying the copy of this report kept in the archives of the Ministry of Cooperation, General Varret protests:

I telephoned the CEMA head of cab to express my disagreement with Cussac's way of doing things. The colonel [...] will ask the CEMA what to do about this matter which has not yet been submitted to him. I think it is superb to send award proposals for AMTs directly to the CEMA without the advice of the MMC chief. AMTs may be placed under the orders of the EMA via a COMOPS, their direct head remains the head of the MAM and their management (rewards, sanctions) remains the exclusive domain of the MMC.¹¹⁸

General Varret's memo is harsh on Colonel Cussac. Like his predecessor in Kigali, the defense attaché and head of MAM was under great pressure to submit to the direct authority of the CEMA,

who favored the choices of the EMP against the hierarchical chain that attached him to the Ministry of Cooperation. He tried to resist, as evidenced by certain messages and memos protesting against the development of a parallel command system marginalizing military cooperation. In early 1993, Colonel Cussac no longer had the means to fight, as will be shown below.

The situation of the head of the MAM in Kigali shows the fate of General Varret, whose days are numbered, both because he was never accepted for a post that traditionally belongs to a general of the marine troops, and because the respect for the spirit and the letter that he demands in countries linked by cooperation agreements thwarts the EMP's hold on France's military policy in Rwanda. Moreover, he cannot count on the Ministry of Defense, whose incumbent particularly wants to put an end to the independence of military cooperation led by the Ministry of Cooperation, nor on the EMA, which is aligned with both the Ministry of Defense and the Élysée.

General Varret observed the influence of the Élysée on French action in Rwanda and tried to oppose it, or at least to make it known and acknowledged - which was a way of pushing it back because this takeover had to remain discreet. The guidelines in this area are clear. The main tool of the Élysée's policy lies in the activism of the President's private staff, whose officials want to control France's action in Rwanda, using means of influence, pressure, intimidation and domination. The analysis of the way in which the President's private staff proceeded shows how the Rwandan dossier, because it is part of the logic of power within the State, gives rise to irregular practices and institutional abuses.

7.1.3 Departments under tension

The analysis of French policies in Rwanda between 1990 and 1994 reveals the singular place of certain important departments, essential to the functioning of the executive branch, but placed in particular orbits, sometimes in competition and often under-used or even marginalized with respect to the main institutions at work in the Rwandan dossier: The Presidency of the Republic, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

the Armed Forces staff (EMA) flanked by the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DRM) and the Special Operations Command (COS), and the Ministry of Defense. The Research Commission examined the case of the General Directorate of External Security (DGSE) and the General Secretariat of National Defense (SGDN), to which should be added institutions of analysis and foresight such as the CAP for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the DAS for the Ministry of Defense, along with the *Établissement public du cinéma des armées* (ECPA). Other sectors should be included in the institutional field covered by the Rwandan dossier, namely those of the economy and finance.

These institutions are under tension because they are torn between their mission imperatives and the parallel command that prevails in the Rwandan case. The DGSE is particularly vulnerable: it analyzes the conflict with the RPF and the internal crisis in the country in a way that is very different from, or even opposed to, the conceptions of the dominant actors on the subject.

7.1.3.1 THE GENERAL DIRECTORATE FOR EXTERNAL SECURITY (DGSE)

The activity of the DGSE was particularly intense in Rwanda from April 1994. Two agents were present at the French embassy from 9 to 12 April (Mufetti mission). Beginning in July, the Service was present alongside the Turquoise forces and closely monitored the activities of the “interim government” in the safe humanitarian zone and in Zaire (Muquoise mission). An emissary was also sent to the RPF to convince it of the humanitarian nature of the operation and to avoid any misunderstanding.

It has not been possible to declassify all of the “raw production” of the services, which makes it impossible to propose here a study of the actions of DGSE agents. On the other hand, it is possible to examine the analyses produced by the Service in the files widely distributed at the top of the State. The DGSE does not escape certain preconceived ideas that are widespread among a certain number of French officials, such as the purely ethnic reading of the political power relations in Rwanda.¹¹⁹ But, in general, its analyses stand in contrast to the dominant conceptions in high places. The DGSE offers a different vision, which does not seem to have been really taken into account.

In 1993, the DGSE presented a critical image of Juvénal Habyarimana. It indicated his responsibility for the massacres of Tutsi and expressed doubts about his good faith. On 18 February, 1993, a very long memo from the DGSE, preserved in the Élysée archives, analyzed the massacres that followed the signing of the power-sharing protocol, signed in Arusha in January. There is a tension in this document between two analyses. The first, which uses the term “ethnic cleansing,” is close to the notion of genocide and is supported by the report of the International Federation of Human Rights. The second, which is well developed in the memo, speaks of massacres, notes the involvement of armed militias, parties, local administration and the government, and is part of a more specifically political interpretation. The DGSE memo does not distinguish between the two, but it should be noted that it clearly presents, at least twice, the FIDH’s interpretation, giving its reader, if he or she so wishes, the possibility of being freed from the reductive interpretation in force at the presidency at the time. Referring to the partition agreements in Rwanda, the DGSE writes:

The risks of slippage implied by such results quickly turned into inter-ethnic massacres in the east of the country, perpetrated by the armed militias of the MRND and the CDR with the complicity of certain local authorities. These massacres took place the day after the departure of a mission of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), which did not hesitate to speak, in its report to be made public on 22 February, of “ethnic cleansing” and denounced the involvement of the entourage of the head of State.¹²⁰

The DGSE then proposed two interpretations, leaving the reader of the memo to decide.

The explanation for these massacres is twofold. According to the first, they were part of a vast program of “ethnic cleansing” directed against the Tutsi, the masterminds of which were people close to the head of State, or at least influential figures in the MRND and the CDR, relayed by the prefects and burgomasters. The second explanation lies in the opposition of the former holders of power to the democratic process, who do not hesitate to awaken the old ethnic demons in order to scupper progress in this area.¹²¹

A parallel is then drawn with what happened in Bugesera in March 1992, and the question of ethnic cleansing is again raised in a cautious formulation that nevertheless suggests that the DGSE endorses this interpretation: “If no tangible proof has,

to date, been collected on 'ethnic cleansing' and the involvement of the authorities in it, the report of the International Federation of Human Rights on Rwanda, which will be made public on 22 February, seems to be an exception."¹²² The massacres of Tutsi and the responsibility of the president's entourage were still clearly indicated in March 1993.¹²³ Later, the Service would produce detailed files on the "Zero network" and its role in the organization of these massacres.¹²⁴

In 1993, in addition to reporting the massacres of Tutsi orchestrated by Habyarimana's entourage, the DGSE expressed doubts about the president's involvement in the democratization process. "His real desire to reach a negotiated settlement of the conflict, in which he would lose part of his power to the RPF, is not evident. Thus, by continuing to arm part of his civilian population under the pretext that the RPF is going to attack, he would tend to show that his actions are not necessarily in line with his positions."¹²⁵ "All subterfuges are used by President Habyarimana to avoid signing the agreements," the DGSE later warned. "He is in fact convinced that they will lead to his downfall."¹²⁶ A few days before Habyarimana's assassination, the Service observed that "since January 1994, the head of state has been trying by all means to circumvent the Arusha Accords, which are unfavorable to him."¹²⁷

After 6 April the DGSE quickly reported the massacres: "Armed with pre-established lists, the soldiers of the Presidential Guard undertook to massacre all the Tutsi, as well as the Hutu from the south or those supporting the opposition parties. Most often, these assassinations did not spare women or children."¹²⁸ The highest French authorities were immediately alerted to the "reactionary nature of the interim government."¹²⁹ This situation posed a problem for France, which the Service explained on 2 May. The ethnicist conception of power relations, from which the DGSE could not free itself, made it impossible to remain neutral in the face of the RPF: "While even South Africa has just put an end to the domination of a minority, it is no longer possible to see barely 14% of the Rwandan population dominating 85% of the Hutu."¹³⁰ In addition, "wiping the slate clean of four years of Franco-Rwandan cooperation" would risk calling into question "the entire credibility of France's specific action in Africa."¹³¹ Nevertheless, the Service

did not forget the massacres orchestrated by the interim government: “Any specific action in Rwanda is in fact confronted with a real dilemma: how to help Rwanda - particularly on the political level - when the only interlocutor truly representative of the majority ethnic group, the interim government, has a clear responsibility in the current massacres?”¹³² The DGSE recommended starting by clearly denouncing the most extremist members of this government: “To be truly effective, France’s action could perhaps begin with an outright condemnation of the actions of the Presidential Guard and more particularly of Colonel Bagosora, director of the cabinet of the Ministry of Defense, who is considered to be the main instigator of the - very targeted - assassinations at the beginning of the crisis.”¹³³ On 11 May, the DGSE again emphasized that the Rwandan government appeared to be “entirely under the control of the most extremist Hutu faction.”¹³⁴ Later, at the dawn of Operation Turquoise, the Service warned once again: “There is a great danger that France [...] will be seen as an accomplice of the current Rwandan government.”¹³⁵

With regard to the RPF, the positions expressed by the Service are certainly marked by mistrust,¹³⁶ but without ever falling into simplifying demonization. By basing its analyses on the intelligence it obtained, the DGSE was led to deny the view of the RPF adopted by a certain number of French officials. Thus, on 2 May, it asserted that the RPF was “most certainly foreign to the attack that cost the life of President Habyarimana,”¹³⁷ an attack that it attributed to Hutu extremists.¹³⁸ On 12 July, while it reported “abuses committed” by the RPF against Hutu, in particular members of the Interahamwe militia, it stated that “in Kigali, occupied by the Rwandan Patriotic Front, one cannot speak of massive reprisals against the Hutu population.”¹³⁹ But it is above all with regard to the crucial question of Ugandan support for the RPF that the DGSE was not afraid, throughout the period under study, to disappoint the French authorities. A November 1990 report indicates that while the RPF does have “accomplices in the Ugandan army,” it does not benefit from “Ugandan institutional support.”¹⁴⁰ In May 1992, a DGSE mission was requested by General Quesnot with the clear mission of demonstrating that the RPF is supported by Uganda.

The agent reports that he was unable to obtain formal proof of this.¹⁴¹ The study of the EMP, in the rest of the chapter, demonstrates that the vision of the RPF was not modified by the results of the DGSE investigation duly communicated to General Quesnot. This observation is reiterated in February¹⁴² and then in March 1993, when the DGSE describes the “military aid” provided by Uganda as “almost certain,” although it “has not yet been possible to establish it by means of conclusive facts.”¹⁴³ In the face of this lack of evidence, the DGSE’s assessment became even more cautious in May 1994:

*As far as external support is concerned, there is no tangible evidence that the Ugandan armed forces were involved alongside RPF troops. The authorities in Kampala probably provide them with logistical assistance, but have no interest in getting more involved. The minority nature of the Tutsi ethnic group does not allow them to count on the RPF taking power, but simply on the integration of this movement into Rwandan institutions, [as defined] by the Arusha agreements. For its part, the interim government is circulating numerous rumors aimed at proving the contrary.*¹⁴⁴

The DGSE’s analyses thus stand in stark contrast to what seems to be the dominant opinion of a number of French political and military officials throughout the period under study. The Service issued warnings about the massacres of Tutsi orchestrated by people close to President Habyarimana, and questioned the latter’s sincerity in the democratization process. It does not confirm the vision of the RPF as a bloodthirsty instrument of a “Ugandan-Tutsi” offensive. Did the recipients of these files deliberately ignore analyses that were contrary to their visions? Did the DGSE not insist enough on making them known? In any case, the DGSE’s analyses do not seem to have had much influence.

7.1.3.2 THE ARMED FORCES CINEMA AND PHOTOGRAPHY DIVISION (ECPA)

In 1993 and 1994, the sound and image operators of the *Établissement Cinématographique et Photographique des Armées* (ECPA) intervened in Rwanda. They covered the last phase of Operation Noroît, the brief Operation Amaryllis at the beginning of the genocide and Operation Turquoise aimed at “stopping the massacres.”¹⁴⁵ Heir to the photographic and cinematographic divisions of the armies created during the First

World War, the ECPA has a double mission of production and conservation of images testifying to the activities of French armies in major contemporary conflicts. The missions of the “soldiers of the image” as they are called in the armies aim in particular at illustrating and documenting the numerous external operations carried out by French troops outside of France. The photographic and cinematographic images produced by the ECPA are used by the communication services of the armed forces, including the SIRPA, and other government services. They are also sold to the major media, and are used for the realization of edited reports, or finished products, which carry the ECPA brand. These activities are based on the existence of raw images, series of photographs or film rushes from which several selections can be made until the finished products are broadcast or marketed. The Research Commission was able to access a very important set of film rushes, which were made available to it. A significant portion of this material has been transcribed for public access.¹⁴⁶

The first two ECPA missions to Rwanda, during Operations *Noroît* and *Amaryllis*, had a limited spatial and, above all, temporal scope: from 9 to 16 March, 1993, for the first mission, and from 10 to 13 April, 1994, for the second mission - only in Kigali for the latter. These restrictions allowed the ECPA teams to take illustrative pictures - not without risks for Operation *Amaryllis*. It does not leave the conventional rails of institutional communication for *Noroît*, as illustrated by the indictment of the RPF and its infiltrators.¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, the much broader framework of Operation *Turquoise* (23 June, 1994- 5 September, 1994), as well as a strong desire to publicize the operation, allowed ECPA operators to work much more ambitiously and produce important audiovisual archives. In particular, the filming team, led by the chief warrant officer operator, not only documented the actions of the French military forces in Operation *Turquoise*, but also documented the genocide, filming and interviewing - often with great acuity - many of the actors,

victims, and witnesses of the genocide.¹⁴⁸ From 8-9 July, 1994, and the establishment of the SHZ, the filming by ECPA teams was much more concerned with filming the humanitarian actions of Turquoise - including the burial of thousands of cholera victims - than with documenting the traces of the genocide.

There are many questions about the use of this ECPA footage: who, at the time, was seeing these images and testimonies?¹⁴⁹ According to the testimony of the chief warrant officer operator, the video tapes that were filmed were sent every day to the ECPA in Paris (or to the SIRPA) by plane. The filmed images were accessible free of charge to the various French television channels for one month.

7.1.3.3 THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ARCHIVES OF FRANCE AND THE CURATORS ON MISSION

Established by the former director of the Archives de France, Charles Braibant, in 1945, curators work within ministries and major institutions to prepare the transfer of archives produced by the departments. This functional creation, associated with the promulgation of the law on archives of 3 January, 1979, gave the National Archives, in charge of the fonds of central administrations, increased power. However, even at that time, and in spite of certain advances, the authority of archivists over the producing services remained fragile, reduced to the goodwill of the institutions and their managers.¹⁵⁰ Those in charge of the Rwandan dossier did not have to fear an authority that was nevertheless placed in a position of counter-power.

7.1.4 Parliamentarians and the Government

The parliamentary system of the Fifth Republic allows elected officials to address members of the government on current affairs according to well-established procedures. Deputies and senators ask oral questions to the President of the National Assembly and the President of the Senate, who notify the Government; since 1974, they have been able to ask unannounced and unpublished current affairs questions in order to guarantee the spontaneity of exchanges. In all cases, the question, the answer and possibly the reply must not exceed four to six minutes in each Chamber. There are therefore no substantive debates. Parliamentarians may

also send written questions to which the answers of ministers or their offices arrive several weeks later.¹⁵¹ It is only after the parliamentary elections that the government is able to make a decision. It was not until the October 1990 war that questions appeared about France's policy in Rwanda,¹⁵² but even more so in 1994. The debates can be situated in the register of emotion or anger, without the political affiliation, the change of majority and the cohabitation really interfering. The whole shows the interest and concerns of the elected representatives and their constituents who sometimes provide them with documentation and precise information drawn from sources other than the usual media. The interventions can be both questions and the transmission of information from the field. Parliamentarians sometimes write directly to ministers because they are approached by their constituents or associations. The government can thus take the measure of what is being transmitted: questions, information, concerns.

The responses of the ministers - most often the ministers of foreign affairs - are very general; they are therefore formalized and identical for several months and sometimes regardless of the minister who responds and the topic addressed. They are more like justifications that are based on the history of military cooperation between the two countries, and do not provide information that would be absent from the media. Those sent by the cabinet are identical: they are the expression of the language of the Quai d'Orsay, and even of the government. The subjects addressed essentially concern the role of the French army and the question of human rights.

7.1.4.1 QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE ARMY IN RWANDA (1990-1993)

Rwanda does not belong to the "field" countries. Its political situation and its ethnic components did not arouse any particular curiosity until October 1990 and the resumption of the war; when France's military presence became more visible, increasingly critical questions were asked about the role of the army, whose "ambiguity" was a source of concern. In March 1991, the Communist deputy, André Duroméa, questioned the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Roland Dumas: far from the ethnicist analysis that is very common, he reminded the audience that the Tutsi, considered to be "rebels," were Rwandans of another

ethnic group, who had been driven out of the country thirty years earlier.¹⁵³ A year later, after the Bugesera massacres, this deputy was more critical and incisive because, in his eyes, “the French army, by its presence, is participating in the continuation of the massacres and atrocities that are being committed in this country.”¹⁵⁴ He asked that the French troops leave and that negotiations resume. His colleague, Jean-Pierre Brard, also a Communist, referring to *Le Monde*, asked a similar question a few days later. He wondered about the peace process, while the French military contingent was supporting the regime in place.¹⁵⁵

Suspicion about the role of the army was not limited to left-wing deputies. Without taking a position himself, in April 1992, the RPR deputy Roland Nungesser sent a very well-founded 23-page file, compiled by a Rwandan, to French and Belgian MPs. The file is very severe with regard to the French officers who planned the operations against the RPF, and especially with regard to Colonel Chollet, “the military proconsul of Paris in Kigali.”¹⁵⁶ He asked that France cease, as Belgium had done, its military interventions in Rwanda to make way for the OAU.¹⁵⁷ Alain Cousin, also an RPR deputy, noted that “from various sources, everyone can hear, here and there, that the French army is fighting alongside Rwandan soldiers who very frequently commit abuses.” He asked the Minister of Defense for precise information on its role.¹⁵⁸

7.1.4.2 PARLIAMENT’S CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The massacres of Tutsi provoked reactions from individuals and elected officials who questioned the members of the government. These massacres have affected the Bagogwe in the north since the beginning of 1991, Bugesera in the east and Gisenyi on the Zairean border, causing several hundred deaths and thousands of displaced Tutsi. Jean-Michel Belorgey, a socialist deputy and chairman of the Commission for Cultural, Family and Social Affairs, was approached on several occasions by various organizations. The *Association des Banyarwanda en Auvergne* appealed for an end to the massacres: “By the prolonged presence of French legionnaires in Kigali, the name of France risks being associated with the atrocities committed by the increasingly repressive regime of President Juvénal Habyarimana;”¹⁵⁹ the organization *Communauté rwandaise de*

France asks the elected representative to present a written question to the government: "In order to preserve the future of relations between our two countries, could you take a clear and energetic action as soon as possible?"¹⁶⁰ For his part, the president of the recently created *French Committee for the Defense of Human Rights and Democracy in Rwanda*, Jean Carbonare, sent him a file showing the extent of the abuses. While the French army reacted quickly to support the Rwandan army, nothing was done on the humanitarian level, he regretted; he asked for an intervention by the deputy in the National Assembly "so that our army would stop protecting a regime that did not respect human rights."¹⁶¹ In 1991-1992, everyone agreed to deplore the arbitrary arrests, the roundups, the forced exiles, and *Kangura's* propaganda. They all denounced France's position towards the Kigali regime and counted on the elected representatives to intervene themselves with the government. Jean-Michel Belorgey makes a harsh synthesis of Jean Carbonare's letter to Roland Dumas, before warning very severely against France's policy:

*It would be wrong for France, by its mere military presence, to be seen as making a contribution; but this is how it must be perceived in certain cases. [. . .] It is precisely the image offered to the world of a passive French military presence in the center of the theater of ethnic persecution that the Rwandan authorities use to convince their nationals and African States of the excellence of a policy of repression to which France, the fatherland of human rights, provides assistance and moral support.*¹⁶²

The deputy asked the head of French diplomacy that the government take a stand in favor of the persecuted ethnic groups. A few months earlier, his colleague Alain Vivien asked Roland Dumas what "our diplomatic representation on the ground has been able to do and with what results" regarding a trial held in Rwanda on 4 February, 1991. This trial "does not seem to have been conducted according to the rules allowing the defense to exercise its full rights."¹⁶³

Elected officials can have very precise information about what is happening in the hills of Rwanda. Thus, the Rwandan, author of the file that Roland Nungesser sent to the Minister, gave information based on his personal experience and his reading.¹⁶⁴ The author comes from the commune of Kibilira, in the sub-prefecture of Ngororero, in the west

of the country, and gives an account of two municipal councillors who contacted him, without specifying the date, to organize a “committee responsible for the extermination of the Tutsi in the commune.” A reward would be given to those who obeyed within four to five days, while Hutu who refused would be executed. The author of this letter reports that more than four hundred people were executed under the watchful eye of “European (probably French) soldiers” who did not intervene. It is not the people in charge of his commune, who are responsible for the massacres that the author denounces, but France, which does not condemn them, contrary to the Rwandan press, international organizations, and researchers.¹⁶⁵ This micro-history is important: it reminds elected officials and the government that the question of Rwanda is a human, individual question and not just an instrument at the disposal of a global policy.

The answers given to the questions, accusations and information transmitted by the elected officials remain very general. Roland Dumas gave a very long answer to Alain Vivien who asked him about respect for human rights. He reviewed the history of Franco-Rwandan relations, from the military agreements of 1975 to the intervention decided by François Mitterrand on 4 October, 1990, and the reminder of respect for human rights, which was the subject of the elected representative’s letter: “In addition to the general situation of human rights in Rwanda, these various interventions have particularly concerned the conditions of the political trials that began on 3 January, 1991 in Kigali. He once again pointed out France’s reminders on the subject, as well as its emotion at the announcement of the sentences. “In any case, France will remain vigilant on this point as on the others and will continue its efforts with the authorities in Kigali in order to convince them of the importance of democratization as a prerequisite for the resolution of the conflict that affects Rwanda today.”¹⁶⁶ As with his colleague, Roland Nungesser, who reported the testimony of the call to massacres¹⁶⁷ and others such as Théo Vial-Massat, a Communist deputy, who questioned the political and military nature of French aid, Roland Dumas took up the history of the military intervention. He emphasized the role of Noroît and DAMI, which made it possible to fight against “the exacerbation of inter-ethnic tensions,” to support democracy, to reassure the population and to avoid serious incidents

in Kigali.¹⁶⁸ During a question session with the government, the UDF deputy Jean-Paul Fuchs asked why the “French legionnaires” were still in Rwanda and what diplomatic means would allow the parties to return to the negotiating table and hold free elections.¹⁶⁹ He was told that the peace agreement that was gradually being drawn up would lead to elections “in the near future.”

From 1993 onwards, the issue of massacres became central and the questioning more radical. The FIDH investigated in Rwanda from 4 to 21 January and its report was a warning. Did its media coverage, starting with Jean Carbonare’s appearance on Channel 2 on 24 January, 1993, have an impact on the debate? Denunciations of violence, massacres, and even genocide are more frequent among elected officials, individuals and associations.

Some elected officials remain mobilized. Guy Penne, a socialist senator for French citizens living abroad and former advisor to François Mitterrand on African affairs, is calling for the government to cease all cooperation with Rwanda, as it did with Togo, until the Human Rights Commission has issued a report on the situation. He wanted the military presence to be reduced and limited to the protection of French nationals.¹⁷⁰ The Communist senator, Danielle Bidard-Reydet, based herself on the FIDH report and on ecclesiastical sources to denounce the situation (“at least 15,000 dead and more than 400,000 wounded,” she emphasized) in a very incisive manner. She goes further than Guy Penne by questioning the presence of the army solely on the grounds of protecting French nationals, “Is France acting in agreement with the Rwandan authorities, as the President of the French Republic has assured the head of state of Rwanda?”¹⁷¹ .” The senator asked the French authorities to reconsider the cooperation policy.

The responses of the Quai d’Orsay to the deputies and senators, whether they came from Roland Dumas or Alain Juppé after 30 March, 1993, were identical, sometimes soothing.¹⁷² It is not a matter of questioning the military presence, which is so central, because it is in conformity with bilateral cooperation agreements. The army protects French nationals, reassures the population and protects Kigali.¹⁷³ In the political sphere, France affirmed its “desire for stabilization and a concern for appeasement,” defended

the establishment of a multi-party system and called for the end of the party-State; it supported the peace process initiated by the N'Sele agreements, signed on 19 March, 1991. While Roland Dumas welcomed the discussions between the parties, he noted with satisfaction that "foreign observers were able to attend the trials of those suspected of collaborating with the Rwandan Patriotic Front."¹⁷⁴ At the same time, he was encouraged by the appointment of a member of the opposition, Dismas Nsengiyaremye, to head the coalition government on 2 April, 1992. "France therefore sincerely hopes that the new Rwandan government, whose primary objectives are to negotiate peace and resolve the refugee problem, will be able to rapidly carry out the mission it has been given."¹⁷⁵

7.1.4.3 FACING THE ATTACK AND THE GENOCIDE

After the attack and in view of the scale of the massacres, some letters have a particular scope and concern the situation of a few people or a family, at the request of an association or an elected official. Although they provide local or individual information, they do not receive more individualized responses than before: the Minister of Foreign Affairs or his office, and sometimes the Prime Minister, respond in the same way. France is doing its utmost, it has no vocation to intervene in Kigali, it respects the neutrality of its mission.

In Parliament, the elected representatives expressed their concerns with a vocabulary that showed the extent of the massacres, even going so far as to denounce the genocide. As early as 13 April, 1994, in the Palais-Bourbon, the UDF deputy, Jean-Claude Lenoir, addressed the Minister of Cooperation, Michel Roussin, to talk about "the deaths [which] are counted in the thousands," and to regret that France had "left the field open to a programmed and announced massacre."¹⁷⁶ Supported by the applause of his group, he counted on the government to make the international community act. The Minister of Cooperation replied that France "cannot be the policeman of Africa" and added, with regard to Amaryllis and the prospects: "We left after having tried, in vain, to reconcile the points of view. For the moment our priority has been our nationals, but France is not abandoning Africa."¹⁷⁷ Fifteen days later, Michel Roussin again communicated on France's policy. After mentioning the "tragedy" and the "unprecedented violence" in

Rwanda, he added:

*Our ambassador to Rwanda has been charged with a mission of evaluation and contact to obtain a cease-fire and the resumption of dialogue between the Rwandans. Today, he is meeting with all parties: the interim government and the leaders of the Rwandan Patriotic Front. France remains in close contact with the UN Secretary General to study the contributions of the international community to the normalization of the situation.*¹⁷⁸

Thus, according to the Minister, France remains active, vigilant and continues to act in accordance with its long-standing policy. As early as 16 May, the Socialist Senator Marcel Vidal mentioned “this unacceptable genocide”¹⁷⁹ because “every day, men, women and children are decimated by entire families, simply because they belong to one ethnic group.” Two days later, during questions to the government, the UDF deputy Charles Millon spoke of Africa, “the scene of a real genocide! From Rwanda, we are receiving unbearable images today, with their trail of violence, horrors and massacres.”¹⁸⁰ Minister Alain Juppé, who had used the term genocide the day before, on 16 May, responded: “The Rwandan government troops engaged in the systematic elimination of the Tutsi population, which led to widespread massacres,”¹⁸¹ and France denounced the situation, calling for an international inquiry and the intervention of an international force. As the weeks went by, questions were asked about the “atrocities of the Rwandan civil war, whose victims numbered in the hundreds of thousands”¹⁸² and “the unbearable situation.”¹⁸³ One month later, the RPR René-Georges Laurin, spoke in the Senate during current affairs questions; he spoke of “the horrible tragedy [...] that it is not excessive to call genocide,” but he seemed particularly struck by the murder of the Archbishop of Kigali and many clerics, mentioning executioners and machetes - a rare mention.¹⁸⁴ After the publication of the report of the UN Commission on Human Rights, the independent Republican Senator José Balareello called for the search for and trial of the perpetrators of acts of genocide.¹⁸⁵ Thus, the massacres are qualified as genocide. Although this term is not used in its legal sense, it most often meets its definition, since in addition to its massification, its planning is emphasized and its horror denounced. However, during the question session with the government on

22 June, the Prime Minister, Édouard Balladur, did not mention genocide, but referred to “internal struggles” and “massacres” when justifying Operation Turquoise.¹⁸⁶

The ministers’ responses are always displaced in time. They refer to “the Rwandan drama”¹⁸⁷ and “the Rwandan tragedy.”¹⁸⁸ The Minister of Foreign Affairs did not mention the term genocide again until the end of September: “What happened in Rwanda is tragic; nothing can justify the genocide committed in that country and its dramatic consequences. Those responsible for the massacres must be identified, punished and excluded from the political future of the country.”¹⁸⁹ On 17 June, Alain Juppé replied to the senators: “It is obvious that there will be no military solution. The 20% of Tutsi, even if they are armed by certain countries in the region, will not be able to impose their law on 80% of Hutu, and the reverse is also inconceivable. It is therefore necessary to find, with the moderates on all sides, ways of reconciliation.”¹⁹⁰ This is partly an admission of failure after France equipped and supported the army of the Habyarimana regime.

The criticism or questioning of France’s policy in Rwanda does not preclude concern for Rwandans. Elected officials continue to relay associations from their constituency to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to request support¹⁹¹ or simply to inform.¹⁹² Presumably, these elected officials support those for whom they act as intermediaries without going through the questions to the government. Based on an Amnesty International document, the *Collectif Rwanda-Nord-Pas-de-Calais* uses the intermediary of the left-wing deputy Jean Urbaniak to obtain more precise information on France’s role in the genocide and on the French army’s links with the death squads.¹⁹³ Others are vigilant and skeptical about France’s relations with the Rwandan authorities, old and new.

The policy towards the new authorities in Kigali is sometimes considered too unfriendly.¹⁹⁴ The Communist deputy Jean-Claude Lefort sent several letters to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. On his return from a parliamentary mission to Kigali, he criticized “the blindness of our country, which has supported, to the very end, the former leaders of this country who have committed and programmed (sic) a real

genocide.”¹⁹⁵ He worries about the message that France’s “wait-and-see policy” gives to Africa “when, after a genocide perpetrated by the former Rwandan authorities, France gives more than the impression of boycotting the new government in place”¹⁹⁶ instead of helping with the reconstruction of the country. After another letter from the deputy, Alain Juppé replied, as he had to others, that he had the same concerns but that he was defending France’s action. Everything depends on the attitude of the international community: “France, throughout the crisis that Rwanda has just gone through, has fulfilled its duty and has tried to make the international community aware of its own.”¹⁹⁷ He rejects accusations of contact with the former authorities. While President Habyarimana’s widow and her family were welcomed in France, raising questions and criticism, the senator for the French abroad, the socialist Guy Penne, while regretting that this reception was denounced as an act of complicity, asked the Prime Minister that the family leave France.¹⁹⁸

7.1.4.4 THE EXERCISE OF A REPUBLICAN FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Exchanges, whether they take place in the National Assembly or the Senate, or whether they are the result of various types of correspondence addressed directly to the cabinets, reflect the freedom of expression that parliamentarians intend to exercise in their relationship with the executive. Are they, however, a means of enlightening the policy and of arguing and explaining it? Do they allow the government to enrich its information and to take it into account? Parliamentary debates and questions to the government provide a multiple view of France’s policy in Rwanda. Elected officials are informed by the media, other sources are rarer, until a parliamentary mission is sent to Rwanda during the summer, and another one in the fall. Individuals and associations also speak out and solicit their deputies more than their senators. The former are, as a result, better informed than the latter.¹⁹⁹ They asked for clarification on politics in Africa, and in Rwanda in particular; information on the role of the army, which the elected representatives did not always consider neutral. It was above all the massacres that aroused suspicion and negative reactions to France’s military policy and diplomacy. From the time of the attack on the airplane,

their new magnitude led to demands for more explanations and to the denunciation of the genocide, which was more often named. Although there was a lot of criticism, it was not always accusatory. The request for France's withdrawal is exceptional. French policy and the army were also praised, especially on the right and in the center, without the traditional right/left divide being clearly drawn, since humanitarian sensitivity often prevailed. The RPR deputy Hervé Gaymard praised the action of French troops in evacuating French and Belgian nationals, but admitted "our powerlessness in the face of ethnic strife, beyond emergency interventions and humanitarian aid."²⁰⁰ The RPR senator, René-Georges Laurin, emphasized the government's beneficial action with the international community: "We are very sensitive to the initiatives already taken by the French government and to the statement you made to us, Mr. Minister, on a possible intervention by France, with its partners." When, referring to Turquoise, he thanked the Minister of Foreign Affairs for "this generous initiative," he was followed by applause from the RPR, the Independent Republicans and the Union Centrist.²⁰¹ The same thing happened after Édouard Balladur's speech on the following 22 June.²⁰² However, in Parliament, there was neither total approval given to France, nor massive categorical disapproval.

Is the government attentive and responsive? Are the stereotypical responses the reflection of a blind or defensive policy? Some letters are annotated and circulated between departments because they have raised questions or sought justification, and some are made public, when they are questions from elected officials to the government. The answers evoke wording from the Quai d'Orsay, a duty of confidentiality. They are marked by continuity despite the change of majority and the cohabitation, since it is a question of defending France's policy. France is the country that has made the most effort since 1990, including bringing the Arusha Accords to a successful conclusion, it has mobilized the international community and it has respected its neutrality despite the accusations made against the RPF. After the attack of the presidential airplane and during the genocide, the ministry used a less diplomatic, more incisive vocabulary. It condemned the genocide. This is what Alain Juppé replied to several letters in mid-June: "What is happening in Rwanda is tragic. Nothing

can justify genocide and abuses of all kinds.”²⁰³ It is systematically a matter of defending and justifying France’s policy, the role of the army in its mission to protect French nationals, rarely more. The cohabitation changed little - and some of the responses were identical regardless of the majority: it was France, not a government, that responded. Alain Juppé’s mention of the genocide on 16 May allowed him to emphasize that “in these intolerable circumstances, the French government was the first to denounce the ongoing genocide. France was also among the first to demand that those responsible for the massacres be sought out, tried and punished.”²⁰⁴

7.1.4.5 PARLIAMENTARIANS AND OPERATION TURQUOISE

This humanitarian operation carried out under a UN mandate provoked some debate among elected officials on the day the resolution was adopted by the Security Council. The Communist deputy Maxime Gremetz felt that this intervention should have been debated: “Faced with a decision as serious as a military intervention, which can only aggravate the tragedy that Rwanda is experiencing, we feel that the national representation must debate and decide in full knowledge of the facts, each one taking its responsibilities.”²⁰⁵ “Courageous decision” on the part of France alone without the support of NGOs, according to deputy Pierre-André Wiltzer.²⁰⁶ The Prime Minister justified this intervention with “moral considerations,” emphasized the principles and indirectly designated those responsible for the genocide by referring to the “populations that are threatened, which are essentially Tutsi populations in the zones controlled by the government.”²⁰⁷ In turn, Alain Juppé intervened to say that the RPF was now taken into account, even if its history since April did not exempt it from criticism, but pointed out that Jacques Bihozagara, the deputy prime minister-designate of the transitional government and an important figure in the RPF, had been received at the Quai d’Orsay that very morning for three hours. The minister met with him for an hour.

After Turquoise, Rwanda was less present in the debates. However, on 19 September, 1994, Robert Galley again mentioned it to denounce the “wall of silence” of the new government and to praise France’s action: “If the French knew the number of massacres that have been avoided thanks to Operation Turquoise and the creation of the

safe humanitarian zone, they would have even more esteem for the government,” he declared.²⁰⁸ While relations with the new government in Kigali are difficult, Michel Roussin stresses the presence of a diplomatic office in Kigali (“This makes it possible to see the progress the Rwandan government is committed to, which has promised us national reconciliation [...]. When this national reconciliation is effective [...], France will resume this cooperation with an interlocutor, which it is quite willing to do, as it will do in the coming days with Haiti.”²⁰⁹

France’s policy in Rwanda does not occupy a particularly dense place in parliamentary debates, but it is certainly present. Elected officials are interested in it for various reasons, but the issue of human rights is crucial. They are sometimes made aware of it by their elected representatives or by associations that question them. The written answers are drafted by the cabinet according to a model that does not vary much: it is a question of listening and justifying, in a very broad way, the policy carried out. The members of the government answer either in the context of questions to the government, or in writing when they are directly addressed. They can also be questioned by other means, by private individuals or associations, by open letters or petitions, with or without supporting documentation. But the common attitude is one of satisfaction with the work accomplished, hoping that the RPF in power will recognize France’s good will.

*7.1.5 The institutionalization of select defense cabinet meetings.
A partial evolution in military decision-making*

7.1.5.1 THE JOXE REFORM OF MILITARY DECISION-MAKING: “SELECT COMMITTEES” AT THE ÉLYSÉE

In a “confidential memo for the President of the Republic [...] submitted to the Cabinet”²¹⁰ on 2 February 1993,²¹¹ the Minister of Defense, Pierre Joxe, proposed a reorganization of military decision-making, which the head of state assumed in its entirety. But the prospect of a cohabitation between the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister seemed likely at that time, given the situation of the parliamentary majority, which had to face the next legislative elections.²¹²

This obliges Pierre Joxe to make this effort to formalize and institutionalize. The future Prime Minister can in fact invoke the constitution in order to demand a sharing of the reserved domains while respecting the primary prerogatives of the head of state. To this end, Pierre Joxe presented a project of “select committees.” He obviously saw in this - another memo intended for the president testifying to this²¹³ - the opportunity to reform practices of opacity, oral communication and phenomena of disempowerment, both political and administrative, which he noted particularly in the Rwandan case. He clearly disapproves of them by virtue of his republican sense of State.

The Constitution makes the President of the Republic the head of the armed forces and as such “he presides over the cabinet meetings and higher committees of national defense” (art. 15) and the ordinance of 7 January, 1959 specifies his powers in this matter. The Prime Minister “determines and conducts the policy of the nation” (art. 20) and “he replaces, if necessary, the President of the Republic in the presidency of the cabinet meetings and committees provided for by art. 15,” i.e. the national defense committees (art. 21). Under the presidency of François Mitterrand, meetings on defense issues were held after cabinet meetings. Their composition is looser than the defense committees and the select defense committees provided for by the Constitution and the ordinance of 7 January 1959.

Indeed, the defense committees, composed of various ministers and civilian and military experts, are convened under the chairmanship of the head of state, to take decisions on “the general direction of defense” (article 7 of the ordinance); the select defense committees, in charge of decisions on “the military direction of defense,” are convened at the whim of the head of government, with an agenda and speakers chosen by him. Although the President of the Republic chairs them, he is more in the background. The secretariat of these committees is provided by the EMP for the Élysée, by the Secretary General of the Government (SGG) for Matignon. The role of the General Secretariat of National Defense was not yet stabilized.

In the context of 1993, the Minister of Defense, Pierre Joxe, proposed changes to François Mitterrand that would allow the Élysée to keep at least some control over defense. Pierre Joxe wanted to

preserve presidential power in this area. The weekly meetings would be replaced by select defense committees, which would always be convened by the Prime Minister and chaired by the head of state, in accordance with the Constitution and the ordinance of 7 January 1959. He proposed that these measures be taken very quickly in order to put them into effect before the probable cohabitation; in the event of opposition from the head of government to the organization of restricted committees, Pierre Joxe suggested that the President of the Republic convene defense committees, as authorized by the Constitution, at that same time.

Indeed, it is appropriate that the head of state be able to retain all his authority on defense issues, that he be perfectly informed in a complex, even hostile, political context, in an international situation still marked by the post-Cold War era and American leadership. France's place in NATO, but also France's policy in Africa, were crucial issues for François Mitterrand, and it was important that his choices be imposed on the executive.

7.1.5.2 IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION OF SELECT DEFENSE COMMITTEES

Pierre Joxe's proposal of 2 February, 1993, was received positively, since core cabinet meetings were convened on 24 February. They are documented by different versions of the minutes and verbatim reports, deposited in the National Archives.²¹⁴ Like those of the cabinet meetings, the minutes of the select committees were drawn up by the Secretary General of the Government (SGG), Renaud Denoix de Saint Marc, and were transmitted to the Secretary General of the Élysée, Hubert Védrine. On the side of the Élysée, preferably General Huchon, deputy to the chief of staff, provided the secretariat for these meetings.²¹⁵ He was succeeded by General Henri Bentégeat. The minutes of the SGG and those of the Élysée accessible in the archives complement each other and make it possible to see the remarks deleted by one or the other secretary: the writing of the secretary general of the government is official, that of the representative of the Élysée is very enlightening. In order to complete the series of minutes of select committees whose agenda mentions Rwanda, the Research Commission was able to access without difficulty the

collection kept at the EMP.

In accordance with the institutions, the participants in the select defense committees, chaired by the President of the Republic, are the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Cooperation, the Chief of the Armed Forces Staff (CEMA), the Chief of the Private Staff (CMP) and the Secretary General of National Defense (SGDN). Each minister is accompanied by senior officials, members of his or her cabinet: secretary general, director of cabinet or chief of staff, for example. Contrary to the 1958 ordinance, neither the Minister of Finance nor the Minister of the Interior are present. As with the cabinet meetings, it is the responsibility of the SGG to send out the invitations to these weekly meetings, whose agenda is limited to an indication of the issue or issues to be addressed: Rwanda (or Africa), the former Yugoslavia or Bosnia²¹⁶ are the most frequently discussed subjects. Sometimes there is only one of these topics submitted for discussion. There may be as many invitations as there are questions: the ministers participate only in the part of the meeting that concerns them.²¹⁷ The interventions may extend what was discussed in the cabinet meetings just before. Thus, on 22 June 1994, François Mitterrand introduced the discussion by saying that “the Rwandan problem was discussed at length this morning in the cabinet meeting. I would now like us to talk about the practical arrangements.”²¹⁸ The President of the Republic presides over the select committees that he opens, usually quite briefly, and then gives the floor to the first speaker, who is not necessarily the Prime Minister or the executive ministers, since the Minister of Cooperation is the first to be asked to speak about Rwanda, and the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces (CEMA) is also very frequently asked.

The process of the committees resembles that of the cabinet meetings. The head of state who presides over them makes a very brief introduction, announcing the first topic to be discussed.²¹⁹ In exceptional cases, this introduction is more specific and he gives the floor to the minister who is to speak. When the subject required it, the Chief of Defense Staff, Admiral Lanxade, spoke at greater length and most often answered questions from François Mitterrand or a minister. Very exceptionally, the Chief of the Private Military Staff (EMP), General Quesnot, or the

Africa advisor, Bruno Delaye, intervened.²²⁰

Were the concerns or worries of Pierre Joxe, who suggested this formula of select defense committee meetings, well founded? The role of the President of the Republic and his relations with the members of the government do not appear to be very different before and during the cohabitation period, either in the way he speaks, or in the way he makes decisions or issues directives.

The five core cabinet meetings²²¹ that preceded the legislative elections resulted in summary reports from the SGG indicating rapid exchanges that lasted a few lines, and ended with the conclusions and decisions of the President of the Republic.²²² The composition of the first core cabinet meeting of the cohabitation, which took place on 2 April 1993, was not completely disrupted: the change of ministers did not immediately imply a change in all the participants, since several senior civil servants still remained in their posts. This was the case for the Secretary General of National Defense, Guy Fougier, who was not replaced until 18 June by General Lerche; at Matignon, the head of the military cabinet was still Admiral Lecointre, but Nicolas Bazire, the cabinet director, accompanied him; at the Quai d'Orsay, Secretary General Serge Boidevaix was replaced by Bertrand Dufourcq at the cabinet meeting of 13 April; at the Ministry of Defense, François Nicoullaud was still François Léotard's chief of staff, and General Rannou was his military chief of staff until 10 May, when he was replaced by General Mercier. This shows a certain continuity among the senior officials, or at least an absence of haste in the changes that are gradually taking place.

Tensions are not perceptible during this first meeting nor during the following ones: no complicity between the members of the government and the President of the Republic is perceptible. The sense of cohabitation is not manifest. "The Prime Minister and I, as well as all the ministers, share the same analysis,"²²³ said President Mitterrand when he introduced the core cabinet meeting of 22 June 1994, the day on which Resolution 929 for Turquoise was voted on; this also means that exchanges of views had taken place previously. However, the Prime Minister was able to give clear political direction. During

the core cabinet meeting of 15 June, the discussion extended to the rescue of orphans and the possibility of evacuations, with various hypotheses. Édouard Balladur finally took the floor to express his desire to act: “We can no longer, whatever the risks, remain inactive. For moral reasons, not media reasons,”²²⁴ before adding that “in such terrible cases, one must know how to take risks.”²²⁵ In this case as well, the President of the Republic immediately expressed his approval, while wishing to limit the intervention. At the end of the discussions at the 15 June meeting, which focused on the future Operation Turquoise, he concluded: “If others are failing, we must go alone with the Africans. We are taking a less effective risk, but our action is urgent and limited. It is the honor of France that is at stake.”²²⁶ Finally, at this crucial moment, it seems that the Minister of Cooperation, Michel Roussin, held his ground and intended to play a role. He was sometimes the first to speak, and he spoke quite often.

7.1.5.3 THE RAISON D’ÊTRE OF THE CABINET. A GENERAL DIRECTION FOR DEFENSE

During this same cabinet meeting, the debates previously focused on a possible intervention. While François Léotard expressed some reservations, or rather pointed out difficulties; after a long intervention by François Mitterrand, the former asked: “Mr. President of the Republic, am I to understand that this operation is a decision or that it is only a question of studying the possibility?”²²⁷ The President replied: “It is a decision for which I take responsibility.” The President of the Republic thus implied that he was the head of the armed forces, and that he was responsible for “the general direction of defense.” Since the select committees on defense were responsible for decisions concerning the “military direction of defense,” the head of state addressed the CEMA and specified: “What I approve of is rapid and targeted intervention, but not generalized action. You are the master of methods, Admiral.”²²⁸ Nevertheless, he had to be kept informed.²²⁹ Without having to reiterate the principles, everyone played their role, and the ministers awaited the decision of the head of state. For example, on 15 April, Alain Juppé asked if France could take in some of Habyarimana’s family that the Central African Republic did not want to keep. The head of state replied: “If they want to come to France, France will welcome them,

naturally.”²³⁰

Is this unity of opinion a reality or a facade? The verbatim of the Secretary General of the Government is the most authoritative.²³¹ Renaud Denoix de Saint Marc writes neutral, clear texts and, although they are not really succinct and fail to capture all the words of the speakers, they are sterile. The notes taken on the side of the Élysée, by General Huchon, head of the MMC, or by a member of the EMP, Colonel Bentégeat or Admiral de Lussy, are much more precise and enlightening on the state of mind of the participants, because the notes record all of the remarks.

Between April and June 1994, the questions addressed concern military or diplomatic operations, men and the origins of the Rwandan drama. The principle of the majority people, the opposition to the Tutsi and the RPF are occasionally evoked. In what terms are the Hutu and the Tutsi evoked? How are the massacres presented? For François Mitterrand, the attack on the presidential airplane was the starting point of the violence and the regime in place had to be protected: “it would be surprising if Habyarimana’s government does not find a safe place in the country where it could hold out for some time.”²³² For President Mitterrand, Habyarimana’s regime remained legitimate and protected the country from the outbreak of violence that emerged after 6 April. “It is clear how this murderous attack against President Habyarimana gave the signal for a massacre,” he said on 15 April, a week after the attack and at the end of Operation Amaryllis; and he asked Admiral Lanxade if these massacres were going to spread.²³³ The latter replied that “they were already considerable. But now it is the Tutsi who will massacre the Hutu in Kigali.”²³⁴ The President’s analysis was honed and modified since on 22 June, he noted that “we must not fail to denounce the genocide perpetrated by the Hutu. Madness took hold of them after the assassination of President Habyarimana.”²³⁵ A week after the start of Operation Turquoise, on 29 June, after the CEMA had taken stock of the situation and the violence of the massacres, François Mitterrand further qualified his remarks: for him, there was always a before and after to Habyarimana’s death: “Historically, the situation has always been perilous. Before the assassination of President Habyarimana, I had not heard of any tragedies inside the country. His assassination created fear

reflexes and unleashed the massacres. The extremist Hutu faction, some of whose leaders were on the president's plane, engaged in inexcusable reprisals." These words reveal a shift in his analysis of the situation, since he does not seem to be making an assumption: that the Tutsi and the extremist Hutu are responsible for the genocide. However, it is difficult to believe that President Mitterrand was not aware of the elements of the case, that he was misinformed about the massacres, their extent, their perpetrators and the victims; this may also be a bias to evoke the double genocide. However, the debate has no place in these cabinet meetings, and the Secretary General of the Government does not include this remark by the President in his report.²³⁶ One wonders whether this is due to embarrassment, or whether the remark is considered of little importance.

The question of the future was raised, again in ethnic terms. In April, Admiral Lanxade spoke of the continuation of "inter-ethnic massacres"²³⁷ and everyone agreed that if one side or the other did not win, the Arusha Accords would have to be implemented.²³⁸ This idea is reiterated because there is no question of setting up "a dictatorship based on ten percent of the population [which] will govern with new massacres,"²³⁹ in the words recorded by the EMP. The Tutsis will impose a dictatorship "in order to control a very large majority of Hutu"²⁴⁰ according to the SGG. For Mitterrand, do ethnicities still carry the same weight? When Alain Juppé asked what should be done with the Tutsi, whether to protect them or evacuate them, he replied: "they could be handed over to the representatives of their ethnic group,"²⁴¹ according to the SGG's minutes, while the EMP's minutes referred to the "RPF zone."²⁴² It is not just a question of differences in expression, because the political, ethnicist connotation is much more present in the minutes of the General Secretariat of the Government, whereas it is more nuanced in those of the General Staff, paradoxically, since General Quesnot is well known for his sympathies towards the Hutu. It is not clear whether the redactors were influenced when they cleaned up their notes.

These select defense cabinet meetings encourage a more precise exchange of views than in the preceding cabinet meetings. The way

they are conducted and what is said are in accordance with the institutions: the president takes decisions of a general nature, while “the military decision” is the responsibility of the government. It seems, however, that these restricted meetings are prepared in advance, since the president occasionally mentions the agreement with the prime minister and the members of the government; they are an opportunity to clarify information or a decision. If he decides alone, the decision is not necessarily his alone. The courtesy of the exchanges does not, however, prevent the sometimes divergent reports that may encourage different analyses of the remarks made by the political leaders.

7.1.6. Cohabitation in the executive branch from April 1993

On the eve of the elections that were to lead to a new cohabitation, Bruno Delaye, the Élysée’s Africa advisor, submitted a memo on “the opposition and France’s African policy”²⁴³ in which he presented the “multiple teams” and the “multiple points of view” (emphasized by Hubert Védrine, or by François Mitterrand who wrote “Seen.” It emerges that, in his eyes, apart from the Foccart-Wibaux-Cazanave team, which was the most serious but did not understand the strategic importance of Rwanda, the others were not very well fleshed out, not very well educated on African issues, or preoccupied by particular interests. In the end, the new team that will come to power wants to give the impression of “renewal” and “moralization” (emphasis added) by planning a general assembly on cooperation to reorganize its policy, but there will be no major changes: there is therefore not much to fear.

However, cohabitation is a daily struggle where few people can be heard by the President of the Republic or the Prime Minister. For the most part, analyses and decisions are made against a background of persistent divergence between the constants of the President of the Republic and rifts with the Prime Minister. The President of the Republic ensures that he is obeyed even if the prior debate with the Prime Minister shows that there is no consensus.

With regard to Rwanda, the example of the exchanges during the core cabinet meeting of 15 June 1994, deciding on Operation Turquoise, is

exemplary in this respect.²⁴⁴ The President of the Republic decided to begin with Rwanda “because the situation requires us to take urgent measures,” and the discussions were opened by the Minister for Cooperation, Michel Roussin; François Léotard, Minister of Defense, expressed his reticence about a French operation: “we could only intervene in the Hutu zone. We would be condemned by the RPF and become victims of media maneuvers. I am therefore very reluctant. But if we were to go anyway, we would need heavy means. François Léotard asked: “Mr. President of the Republic, am I to understand that this operation is a decision or that it is only a matter of studying the possibility?” The President of the Republic replied: “It is a decision for which I take responsibility [...] What I approve of is a rapid and targeted intervention, but not a generalized action. You are the master of methods, Admiral,” he concluded to Admiral Lanxade, the Chief of Defense Staff. The exchanges continued with the intervention of the Prime Minister: “But with whom will we go? There is no question of going alone.” President Mitterrand replied: “We have the Africans, and then the Hutu are in favor of France and the Tutsi are in favor of the Belgians. If the others fail, we must go alone with the Africans. We take the risk of being less effective, but our action is urgent and limited. It is the honor of France that is at stake.”

Behind these traditional presidential arbitrations, the cohabitation shows the whole range of more or less controlled and more or less expressed divergences: to be the first, to take advantage of the silences of the other, to have an intermediary, to play “cooperation” while watching for the other’s faux pas.

7.1.6.1. BEING FIRST RATHER THAN DECIDING TOGETHER

Each of the actors knows how to express their agreement, or even more so their disagreement, both to maintain and increase their own room for maneuver and for the smooth running of institutions.

On the surface, the two heads of the executive remain united, concerned only with the interests of the country, beyond protocol irritations. In this sense, the joint communiqué is a display, in principle useful to both authorities, of their ability to work together in the

national interest: this is the case of the joint communiqué of 18 June at 8 p.m. concerning the creation of Turquoise: “France wishes to see an international operation with a humanitarian aim set up in Rwanda, intended to save human lives and to put an end to the massacres that are being perpetrated in that country.”²⁴⁵

The expression “agreement” is often so laden with reticence that it is tantamount to firm disagreement, and the press is not mistaken. Thus *Libération* of 22 June, 1994 commented: “the reasons for a French U-turn: if the principle of intervention is accepted, there is not total agreement between the Quai d’Orsay, Matignon and the Élysée.” The day before, on 21 June, the Prime Minister had written to the President of the Republic :

*we agreed that France could not remain passive in the face of the tragedy in Rwanda because it is Africa, because it is a French-speaking country, because it is a moral duty. We therefore decided together to send French soldiers to the region. The conditions for the success of the operation seem to me to be the following [...].*²⁴⁶

The Prime Minister displays formal respect for the primacy of the President of the Republic, but under the appearance of agreement, the disagreement is present and detailed.

Édouard Balladur warns:

*I believe that all the precautions examined must be taken and that all the conditions we have set must be respected, otherwise we would be dragged much further than we want to go and with incalculable risks, into a conflict that could have repercussions throughout the region. I am struck by our isolation. Of course, there is no lack of good words and encouragement. But we must not, at any price, get bogged down alone, 8,000 kms from France, in an operation that would lead us to be targeted in a civil war.*²⁴⁷

This disagreement between the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister is still evident in the reception of the RPF by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. On 22 June, Bruno Delaye presented the President with an important memo entitled “Rwanda: meeting in Paris with representatives of the RPF: Received by Alain Juppé.” The memo describes the exchanges with Théogène Rudasingwa and Jacques Bihozagara (the RPF representative in Brussels) who were very critical of French policy in Rwanda, including Operation Turquoise,

which was not humanitarian. What is important here is the tone and the comments made by the Matignon representative, Philippe Baudillon.

During this meeting, the Matignon representative (Philippe Baudillon) made a point of pointing out to RPF leaders that, for the past year, France has had a new African policy. He spoke in these terms: "The permanent concern of Mr. Balladur, who has been leading the government for a year, is to establish clear and co-responsible relations with all African countries. For a year now, our actions have proven this. Your interpretation of French intentions in Rwanda is not the right one. It is in contradiction with what has been done for a year. The French would not understand that our intervention was anything other than humanitarian. Times change, your analysis of current French policy is influenced by a past period. This is what the Prime Minister wanted you to know." The representative of the Defense Cabinet went in the same direction, adding that the military, within the framework of the planned intervention, wanted to be in permanent contact with the RPF. The RPF SG replied, "You talk about a change in French policy in Africa, but obviously, in the case of Rwanda, nothing has changed [...] you want to set up a permanent liaison with us, but you are putting the cart before the horse. We have told you that we are opposed to your intervention."²⁴⁸

This account attracts the angry annotation of the President of the Republic against the tone used by Matignon, with a handwritten note underlined twice by François Mitterrand: "inadmissible! [underlined once] to tell [underlined twice] Matignon [underlined 3 times], all accompanied by exclamation marks in the margin. And at the beginning of the memo "Inadmissible, protest to Matignon. F.M." Hubert Védrine asks Bruno Delaye to "say this" and adds "I will also say it to Mr. Bazire." The other consequences are not known.

For his part, the spokesman for the Élysée, Jean Musitelli, did not say anything different: "We observed a split between the President of the Republic and Alain Juppé on the one hand; Édouard Balladur, François Léotard and Michel Roussin on the other: the latter put the brakes on. Édouard Balladur published yesterday a list of five conditions, which is restrictive."²⁴⁹

The President of the Republic, assisted by the Secretary General of the Élysée, Hubert Védrine, maintained the pressure by issuing firm instructions to the government, as shown in a memo dated 15 June 1994 with a handwritten reply from the President of the Republic: "Yes":

Following what you said at the core cabinet meeting on Rwanda, I confirmed to the Ministry of Defense, the MAE, and the Ministry of Cooperation that it

was necessary to submit to you very quickly a list of specific actions [underlined by HV] that France could carry out in Rwanda (protection of hospitals or others)/ When this choice has been made, would you like an announcement to be made, for example with a communiqué, by the end of the week, to publicize these actions by F (and if possible those of other countries)/ It seems to me that this would meet an expectation of the public.²⁵⁰

In this example of displaying the president's primacy, some important words describe the keys to the policy that the president intends to keep: "submit" (the constitutional process), "ad hoc actions" (only the president calibrates the volume of military action), "prompt" (he controls the clock) and "communicated" (elected by the people, he reports directly to them). It is indeed a concentrate of the practice of cohabitation.

7.1.6.2. ENCROACHING ON THE SILENCES OF THE OTHER

In cohabitation, it is necessary to be the first to take a position in order to put the partner in a situation where they have to justify themselves. Faced with a President of the Republic who is stuck on the Constitution, the cohabitation Prime Minister is tempted to occupy the field with proposals or initiatives, the better to impose himself at the center of the debate; his weapon is the publication of the program and the global vision of Turquoise, which allows him to try to raise himself to the level of the President of the Republic. Thus, in his letter to the President of the Republic of 21 June, 1994,²⁵¹ Édouard Balladur unilaterally set out the conditions for the operation in Rwanda:

Authorization by the Security Council

Limitation of the operation to a few weeks while awaiting the arrival of UNAMIR. This has also been decided, but we must not conceal the fact that it will be very difficult for us to leave if UNAMIR does not arrive, and that its arrival is not certain.

Limiting operations to humanitarian actions (sheltering children, the sick, and terrorized populations) and not allowing ourselves to go on what would be considered a colonial expedition in the very heart of Rwanda's territory. Any lasting occupation of a site or part of the Rwandan territory would present very great risks, given the animosity that it would arouse and the political interpretation that would be given to it.

Positioning our forces near the border in Zairian territory, the only one available to us.

Launching operations as soon as significant contingents

are provided by other countries.

This program is both a reminder and a warning; perhaps it is also aimed at General Quesnot when he writes that we must not “allow ourselves to be drawn into a colonial expedition”? In any case, François Mitterrand did not reply. The silence suggests that the President of the Republic intended to be sovereign.

7.1.6.3. PRESERVING AN INTERMEDIARY RECOGNIZED BY BOTH INTERLOCUTORS

One-on-one meetings between the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister raise difficulties because of the tension that characterizes them and the concern of each not to back down under the evaluative gaze of his supporters. In such conditions, the intermediary of reference that the Secretary General of the Presidency constitutes is precious for both. He acts as an intermediary and guardian of the necessary contacts, even during the most tense periods. He transmits messages between the two authorities, inserting the nuances of approval, reservation or warning that he has perceived. Thus, Hubert Védrine annotated an AFP dispatch of 21 June 1994 for the President of the Republic: “the Prime Minister has asked me to tell you that the RPR group is very reluctant, despite Jacques Chirac’s recent appeal, to intervene (remarks which he did not repeat before the RPR group).”²⁵² A week later, on 27 June, the Secretary General transmitted to the President “the idea that the Prime Minister submits to you”²⁵³ concerning the presence of delegates from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to conduct contacts with, in particular, the “Rwandan government that has taken refuge” in Gisenyi. The President agreed, but the important thing was that the government’s proposal be “submitted” to him.

The Secretary General of the Élysée carries out the wishes and decisions of the President of the Republic, as shown in the above-mentioned memo on the implementation of the June 1994 core cabinet meeting.²⁵⁴ He also fulfills a representative role as spokesman: in a letter dated 22 June, 1994, he responds to the president of the International Federation of Human Rights, who had criticized French policy. Disputing the “extremely partisan and violent terms”²⁵⁵ of the report, the Secretary General asserts his role as a bulwark for the president of the Republic.

7.1.6.4. CONDUCTING “COOPERATION” WHILE WATCHING FOR THE OTHER’S FAUX PAS

Everyone is cautious because the first to show reluctance to cooperate may lose. But “shocks” are not rare. The two heads of the executive know how to show their distance, the art of marking their differences and not being carried away by the initiatives of the other. Thus, General Quesnot does not receive authorization to accompany a minister to Africa: the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister each play their own game; each collaborator tends to reinforce the convictions of his boss. The President of the Republic receives daily the elements collected and presented by General Quesnot who does not hesitate to criticize the strategy chosen by the government.

To date, only a Senegalese detachment and a Mauritanian medical team have joined the Goma base [...] our detachment is continuing to build up its strength. By the end of the day, its numbers should reach 1,500 men. The reconnaissance of refugee camps and threatened communities continues near the Zairian border. Some nuns and the family of Mr. Twagiramungu have been evacuated [...].

For the continuation of our action, the Prime Minister, who still fears that our troops will get bogged down and come into contact with the RPF, yesterday instructed Admiral Lanxade to prohibit any presence of our units on Rwandan territory for more than 24 hours and to limit patrols to the border region. In particular, he opposed the maintenance of a surveillance and deterrent element at the N’Gada Pass, which controls access to Kibuye from Gitarama, and whose seizure would make it possible to cut western Rwanda in two.

comment [underlined in the text] The success of our intervention would be called into question if massacres were to resume in sectors where our presence is very fleeting, and above all in the event of a break in the front line, which would provoke a flood of millions of refugees that we would be unable to control. The only technical response would be to control a few key points (notably the N’Gada Pass) by continuing the count and ensuring the protection of the most threatened refugee camps, particularly in the southern region (Gikongoro, Butare), in order to freeze population movements while awaiting the promised logistical assistance and the arrival of UNAMIR. This requires more than a few men and women coming and going from the Zairian border.²⁵⁶

This memo from the Chief of Staff, dated 27 June, 1994, is annotated by Hubert Védrine: “reported Rwanda and the

Provence landing.” This memo expresses the strong disagreement between General Quesnot and the Prime Minister. The terms used (“back and forth”) show a kind of distance if not contempt for the latter.

The advisors confirmed the two authorities in their differences. The opposition between the two actors of the cohabitation becomes clearer and stronger, day after day. The contact of each with his own advisors methodically supplants the direct exchanges between the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister. The watchdogs of both camps monitor the initiative of the other side. In this sense, a memo from Hubert Védrine dated 15 July 1994 informs the President of the Republic that “the Prime Minister presided over a meeting on Rwanda on Friday morning.”²⁵⁷ This first sentence is the most important, even before the precision that “the Prime Minister asked the Minister of Defense to make a first withdrawal, even if it is symbolic (200 to 300 men before 31 July),” because the Prime Minister “presided” over a general meeting on Rwanda. When the AFP of 15 July announced that the members of the genocidal government would be arrested by French forces, Hubert Védrine noted that “the President’s reading was not what the Prime Minister had said.”²⁵⁸ Cohabitation is vigilance, and in this case, the Élysée found a governmental faux pas.

7.1.6.5. ATTEMPTING TO EXERT PRESSURE ON THE OTHER WITHOUT BEING PRESSURED IN RETURN

During the cohabitation, the Prime Minister and the ministers spoke out to put pressure on the President of the Republic, and even to publicly set conditions; this clearly deviated from the rules of behavior between a President of the Republic and his ministers. In mid-June, many positions were taken to prove that Matignon was governing. First, Alain Juppé, Minister of Foreign Affairs, declared on 16 June, 1994 in *Libération* that he wanted to “intervene in Rwanda.” He made four statements: the crisis had political as well as ethnic origins; the international community had shown a guilty passivity; French diplomacy was mobilized in favor of a political settlement; and finally, the future of Rwanda required that moderates on all sides be supported. The message sounds like a prescription, and the President of the Republic

could not accept such an indirect injunction.

Other examples show this desire for government pre-eminence: on 21 June, in his letter to President Mitterrand, the Prime Minister set out the conditions for the success of Operation Turquoise, after mentioning their agreement.²⁵⁹ Finally, Edouard Balladur explained himself during questions in Parliament on 22 June.²⁶⁰

The effects of this underground but constant struggle can be felt. Thus, in the exchange between the President of the Republic and the ministers on the opportunity and the possibility of coming to the aid of Belgian soldiers, France's capacity to react was paralyzed by hesitations and consultation procedures. In order to write his memo to the President of the Republic on 15 April 1994, Hubert Védrine sought the opinion of Alain Juppé and Michel Roussin on the possibility of coming to the aid of the soldiers who wanted to disengage themselves. Alain Juppé "does not see how, if the Belgians so request, we could refuse them our assistance.[?]" On the other hand, Michel Roussin is more reticent, because that would put us back into the trap that could have unfortunate consequences for us in the region. He came to the same conclusion: "If the Belgians officially make the request, we will not be able to refuse."²⁶¹ But on the same day, 15 April, General Quesnot wrote to the Secretary General of the Élysée that the Belgians had left and that "the Belgian problem is therefore, as far as we are concerned, settled immediately."²⁶²

7.1.6.6. PERMANENCE AND MUTATIONS UNDER COHABITATION

The cohabitation did not fundamentally modify French policy in Rwanda. The President of the Republic and his entourage were careful to maintain the lines of the previous years. However, in a certain, unexpected way, it forced the two heads of the executive branch to discuss and listen to each other. The President of the Republic was able to continue his policy of trust and support for the institutions, which are dominated by the Hutu. The Prime Minister was able to sketch out contacts with the new RPF government and encourage the necessary adaptations of French policy.

The question arises, however, as to whether cohabitation has changed the decision-making process for Rwanda as it is carried out at the top of the executive. This issue is one of the

major subjects of foreign policy and, as with Bosnia, its characteristic is that it involves France through a situation of military engagement. In fact, Rwanda mobilizes important means and the constant attention of political authorities and State services on many occasions. The frequency of questions about Rwanda in the select defense committees is a particular example. The reports that emanate from these meetings also reflect the constructive and understanding relationship between the two heads of the executive, who are obliged to share the decision on this issue.

The reserved domains of the President of the Republic became shared domains, with the Prime Minister invoking his responsibility for policy implementation to request this sharing of the decision. For François Mitterrand, accustomed to deciding alone or with his advisors, the change was profound. Procedures were introduced that effectively allowed for the exercise of these shared responsibilities: every Tuesday evening, with the agreement of the President of the Republic, a meeting was held at the Hôtel Matignon to prepare for the next day's core cabinet meeting, with representation from the presidency and without decision-making powers. Although the decision to launch Operation Turquoise was taken by François Mitterrand, it was proposed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and supported by the Prime Minister, who invested a great deal of effort in its implementation on the ground and in the effort to explain it both nationally and internationally. Édouard Balladur's trip to the United Nations on 11 July, 1994, to explain the reasons for France's action, and his trip to Goma with the Minister Delegate Lucette Michaux-Chevry, are the expression of his responsibility in diplomatic and military matters. The case of Rwanda demonstrates this particularly well.

Nevertheless, tensions can be high between the two heads of the executive. They are expressed internally, between the two leaders and their cabinets, and rarely externally, as shown by the practice of joint communiqués on the subject. The assertion of this executive ambition by the Prime Minister contrasts with the previous situation, in which the President of the Republic exercised an indisputable and, in a way, undisputed authority over French policy in Rwanda. The first chapters of this Report, as well as the preceding pages, have established the direct line characterizing the

Élysée's hold on the dossier, before the present chapter is led to delve into the crucial role of the personal military staff in the implementation of this presidential policy. The entry into cohabitation modified the practices of the president and raised the question of the EMP in the new system. François Mitterrand needed such an advisory service, and sometimes also an action service, in the face of a Prime Minister who was very present in the military domain, as shown, for example, by the initiative of the "Livre Blanc" (White Book), preceded by the commissioning of a report from Senator Trucy on *The Participation of France in Peacekeeping Operations*.²⁶³ General Quesnot was thus charged with marking the President's territory and principles in military matters, and he carried out his task with determination.

In Rwanda, the situation was more complex insofar as the operational part of the EMP's activities was now conducted by the Ministry of Cooperation, where General Huchon had replaced General Varret. Colonel Bentégeat, General Quesnot's new deputy, arrived at the Élysée on 4 May, 1993, and seems to have been less involved than his predecessor in the work of influence and command in the field, or at least there is no archival trace of this in the fonds consulted by the Commission. If François Mitterrand lost an operational capacity in Rwanda, he retained, with his chief of military staff, a strong power of influence, notably in the core cabinet meetings where General Quesnot sat and spoke.

Before the cohabitation, Matignon had no role in Rwanda, which was doubly (or even triply, since it is Africa) the reserved domain of the head of state. This is therefore a notable change in the function of the Prime Minister, and even more pronounced than during the first cohabitation. This new role requires Matignon to have increased resources, experienced advisors, analysis and documentation services. The SGDN could act as a diplomatic-military unit under the Prime Minister. We will see later that the memos produced are not those that Matignon could legitimately expect.

This intellectual and institutional reconfiguration of the Prime Minister's perimeter also concerns the key ministries in the Rwandan dossier. Close to Matignon, the Ministry of Defense with François Léotard

worked closely with Édouard Balladur, as did the Ministry of Cooperation, at least during the period of Michel Roussin. Conversely, relations were sometimes tense between Matignon and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the latter espousing more the visions of the Élysée. The face-off between the Hôtel de Brienne and the Quai d'Orsay reproduced the situation of the previous period, coupled with a political divide, with François Léotard proving to be “Balladurian” and Alain Juppé remaining “Chiracian.”

7.1.7 Irregular practices and institutional drift at the top of the State. The archetype of the EMP

7.1.7.1. THE EMP, AN ARCHIVAL ENIGMA

The public archives to which the Research Commission was able to gain access only partially concerned the personal military staff of the President of the Republic. Indeed, for the given period, the archives relating to Rwanda form only one box, consisting essentially of memos addressed on the subject to the head of state via the Secretary General of the Presidency. These memos, signed by the Chief of Staff or his deputy, are quite often co-signed by the African Affairs Advisor or his deputy.

This box of archives is far from representing the archival production of a service that was very mobilized in Rwanda, taking on responsibilities not only as advisor to the president but also operationally, as demonstrated by various elements found both at the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces Staff and in the field. They are presented in the rest of this chapter. Letters from the EMP, which arrived in other services but were not found in its archives, also attest to an abundant archival production that is not reflected in the single box of archives available. These letters should obviously have been archived by the department and then added to the presidential fonds of François Mitterrand. This was not the case, as the Commission was able to observe. The Commission's President asked the Élysée's archivist for assistance, and he was directed to the current personal military staff, whose authorities were only able to certify the material absence of archives relating to this period and this subject in the premises at 14 rue de l'Élysée. The only relevant documents

available at the EMP are a collection of minutes of select defense committee meetings that the Commission, which was well received by the successive EMPs of this period (2019-2021), Admirals Roegel and Rolland, was able to consult.²⁶⁴

The rare archives of the EMP found in various military, diplomatic and even private offices of the head of state testify to the intense activity of the special staff on the Rwandan case. They make it possible to establish a series of facts that raise questions about the functioning of the service and the actions of its leaders. Once these facts have been established, which the first six chapters of the Report regularly report on, it is appropriate to ask a fundamental question about the degree of autonomy of the special staff and the nature of the orders received from the head of state.

The question is crucial given that at a certain level of political decision-making, it seems that the use of “verbal orders” is frequent. It is very likely that this practice was targeted by the Minister of Defense, Pierre Joxe, when in February 1993, he tried to hand over to Hubert Védrine, for the head of state, a memorandum for the reorganization of decision-making in military matters at the presidency of the Republic. Although it seems to be customary and tolerated, the “verbal orders” undoubtedly pose a problem, in particular because they leave no trace and transfer to the executor - who documents the implementation of the order - the paternity of the decision. It would be up to the latter to request written confirmation of the “verbal order,” but this requirement may be strongly resented. At the very least, a written record by the executor of the order received would have been necessary, and useful to the historian who is then forced to look for other clues to identify the decision-making process.

The memos of the EMP attest, in essence, to orders received. The archives that have been found show that the EMP was very active in Rwanda. These documents, which have been exhumed from the EMP, essentially concern the deputy to Admiral Lanxade and then General Quesnot, General Huchon. They concern two sets. The first is made up of confidential letters, outside the official circuit, generally addressed to the heads of the DAM, and whose avowed objective is to put pressure on diplomats to support the maximalist orientation of the French intervention in

Rwanda. The second set consists of a collection of faxes addressed confidentially, and always outside the official circuit, to the defense attaché in Kigali to request information and pressure the defense attaché to endorse this maximalist direction. It is likely that the volume of this unofficial correspondence - some of which even requires "destruction after reading" on the part of the addressees - would be much greater than the number of documents that could be found by the Research Commission. Further investigations would be desirable.

In order to appreciate the action of the EMP, it is also possible to analyze more official documents emanating from the head of state and the secretary general, as well as from the minister of defense. Finally, direct intervention in the field is proven by other functional archives that document these actions of an irregular nature, presented below. Indeed, the private staff of the President of the Republic has no operational function, except for the interface of nuclear deterrence. The Rwandan case demonstrates the opposite. These repeated practices of deviation from the norm and of parallel chains serve a policy defended by EMP officials and which corresponds to that of the President of the Republic. They are no longer advisors, but also direct executors.

7.1.7.2 THE EMP, AN INFORMATION CONTROL WITHIN THE PRESIDENCY

Thus, within the *Élysée*, the circuits of information circulation are subject to tensions and arbitrations that must be considered when studying the French position in the Rwandan crisis and the Tutsi genocide. The archives of Secretary General Hubert Védrine²⁶⁵ reveal the muted struggle, from 1990-1991 onwards within the *Élysée*, for access to DGSE memos between the Director of the Cabinet, the Secretary General, and the Chief of the Private Staff. The role of the director of the cabinet in the analysis of these memos, including on Africa, remains poorly documented in the absence of a consultation of his archives. At the end of 1990, an interesting reminder of the EMP can be found in a memo addressed to Gilles Ménage on 21 December 1990. Admiral Lanxade asked the director of the cabinet that the DGSE memos be transmitted to him and not only to the

African unit: “The rule used to be that the DGSE sent all its productions to the EMP, which was responsible for their distribution.”

On 20 June, 1991, François Mitterrand sent a DGSE memo (brought to him by the director) to Gilles Ménage, who sent it to Hubert Védrine “for information.” It is written on a post-it note that J.-L. Bianco “kept all of Mr. Silberzahn’s memos,” a file is opened and these memos put “in the safe.”²⁶⁶

7.1.7.3 INSISTANT “ANTI-RPF POSITIONS”²⁶⁷. THE ETHNICIST CONSTANT OF THE EMP

The EMP bears a very significant responsibility for the establishment of a general hostility on the part of the Élysée towards the RPF, which was very quickly characterized by the supposed ethnicity of its combatants, a hostility that never wavered throughout the period. This ethnicist constant was never invalidated by the head of state, nor rejected or disproven, for example in the memos sent back to him by his personal chief of staff or his deputy. The “anti-RPF positions” of General Quesnot were noted by the Secretary General in a memo to the President of the Republic at the end of June 1994, the problem they posed being treated from the point of view of image, not substance. François Mitterrand accepted such positions. One can deduce that they are his own. The ethnicist obsession distorting the political objectives of the RPF and its membership in the Rwandan nation (in exile) is evident even in the memos sent to the President of the Republic under the cover of the Secretary General, Jean-Louis Bianco and then Hubert Védrine. For the EMP, the opponents of the Kigali regime are “rebels” from Uganda. Above all, they are members of a minority ethnic group with ambitions to conquer power by force of arms, thereby threatening a democracy defined by a “majority people,” the Hutu, who, according to statistics, make up 85% of the Rwandan population, excluding Tutsi and Hutu democrats in exile. This conception of democracy crushed by ethnic logic reflects a major intellectual flaw in the French decision-making process.

In October 1990, the EMP was unable to concretely characterize

the RPF military offensive, first “Ugandan-Tutsi” and then “Ugandan-RPF.” In the space of a few days, Colonel Huchon and then Admiral Lanxade coined the very vague notion, which was never really defined, of an “Ugandan-Tutsi” offensive, to signify a collusion between the nationality and the supposed ethnicity of the attackers.²⁶⁸ The expression was used again by Admiral Lanxade and then by General Quesnot in nine memos written between 3 February 1991 and 27 April 1992.²⁶⁹ It is significant that in July 1992, General Quesnot replaced the expression “Ugandan-Tutsi” with “Ugandan-RPF”²⁷⁰ in his memos to describe the various offensives. On the other hand, following the offensive of 8 February 1993, the expression “Ugandan-Tutsi” was used again in a memo to the President of the Republic,²⁷¹ proof of the EMP’s inability to think beyond its ethnicist representations.

In fact, the EMP will never abandon this ethnicist reading of the conflict, which, on the contrary, designates the Tutsi, a “minority ethnic group,” as the adversaries to be fought to preserve the power of the Hutu “majority people.” A certain amount of hesitation is already perceptible regarding the identification of the adversary to be fought, sometimes simply summarized by ethnicity on the side of Admiral Lanxade. In January 1991, the Ugandan reference disappeared significantly in the EMP memos. The enemy was now defined only by its strict reduction to an ethnic group. Thus, Admiral Lanxade spoke of “Tutsi incursions”²⁷² and then of a “new Tutsi offensive”²⁷³ against Rwanda, an expression which was in fact the title of the memo he addressed to the President of the Republic. For his successor, General Quesnot, things were more definite. The ethnic composition of the RPF was the enemy to be fought to preserve the power of the “majority Hutu people.” At the time of the installation of the multiparty system in April 1992, shortly after the Bugesera massacres, the head of the EMP wrote as follows: “The latter [the RPF], essentially composed of the minority Tutsi ethnic group (10% of the Rwandan population), reluctantly considers a democratic process that will inevitably support the majority Hutu ethnic group of President Habyarimana

(85% of the Rwandan population).”²⁷⁴ The RPF fighters are not only “rebels,” whose bad faith General Quesnot is “sure of,”²⁷⁵ they are “predominantly Tutsi,”²⁷⁶ he wrote with Thierry de Beaucé in May 1992, and above all, they are opponents of the democratization of Rwanda: “This development considerably hinders the armed rebellion of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which is in an ethnic minority (Tutsi represent only 10% of the Rwandan population).”²⁷⁷

General Quesnot, in fact, regularly notified the President of the Republic of his fear that an ethnic minority might find itself in a position to govern the country, and that massacres would result. At the time of the RPF offensive in the summer of 1992, he was alarmed at the possible seizure of power by this “minority ethnic group” and the consequences, not so much for Rwanda as for the Hutu: “The population, the majority of which is Hutu, is fleeing the fighting, refusing to remain in the territories invaded by the RPF, which is essentially composed of Tutsi.”²⁷⁸ In February 1993, although he was alarmed by “the tragic path of Hutu-Tutsi ethnic confrontations” in Rwanda, it was the RPF that he referred to as the potential massacres, which had programmed “ethnic cleansing,” an expression that he repeated in two memos to the President of the Republic, the first time on 18 February 1993,²⁷⁹ the second on 3 March 1993 when he pleaded for the core cabinet meeting of the same day to address “the serious violations of human rights by the RPF: systematic massacres of civilians, ethnic cleansing, population displacement....”²⁸⁰ Conversely, the head of the EMP makes little mention in his memos of the massacres perpetrated by the Hutu against the Tutsi during the entire period from 1990 to 1993, except through the expression “inter-ethnic massacres,” used shortly after the massacre of Tutsi in the Bugesera region in March 1992, in which he erases the fact that the dead were exclusively Tutsi: “On both sides,²⁸¹ tensions are fanned. Inter-ethnic massacres have been perpetrated. The Rwandan army and gendarmerie avoided intervening. International opinion has been alerted.”²⁸² There is also little mention of the massacres of January 1993 or of the FIDH report published at the same time.

During the period from July to August 1994, the EMP memos contribute to clarifying this institution’s view of the events underway in Rwanda, and in particular in the SHZ. Generally

speaking, they were only briefing notes for the President of the Republic, who was exhausted from his trip to South Africa, and they confirmed the control of Prime Minister Édouard Balladur over this issue. Several themes emerged: the EMP's deep hostility towards the RPF, the question of relations with the *genocidaires*, and finally that of the refugees in the camps.

On 6 July, 1994, on his return from his trip to South Africa, the President of the Republic François Mitterrand was to meet with his Prime Minister Édouard Balladur to discuss the situation in Rwanda and Yugoslavia, which led to the drafting of a preparatory memo by General Quesnot.²⁸³ This was an opportunity to take stock of Paul Kagame's statements of appeasement made at the time when François Mitterrand was in South Africa. The RPF leader stated that he did not want to confront the French forces of Operation Turquoise or to completely conquer the country. Finally, he wanted to work for the establishment of a cease-fire. The head of the EMP wrote that these declarations "could constitute a turning point in the Rwandan conflict and facilitate our action."²⁸⁴ He also welcomed the fact that the SHZ project had been approved by the UN Security Council, with the support of its Secretary General. In the SHZ, specifically, the French forces "continue to regroup and evacuate threatened Tutsi. About fifteen militiamen who were attacking a hotel in Gikongoro were disarmed by the Turquoise detachment."²⁸⁵ According to General Quesnot, the Prime Minister's main concerns were "the weakness of the commitment of NGOs in our humanitarian zone, where there are more than 400,000 refugees" and "the poor prospects for the relief of our forces at the end of July."²⁸⁶ The question of refugee management in the SHZ was the central problem for the EMP, which returned to the subject the very next day in a new memo, co-signed by General Quesnot and Bruno Delaye. The SHZ was described as "the largest refugee camp in the world"²⁸⁷ and, as such, Michel Roussin estimated French food aid at 50 million francs, which was far less than what was needed on the spot. As a result, the sluggishness of the NGOs was once again denounced and it was pointed out that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was to receive their representatives the following day.

This memo also sets out for the first time the refusal, formalized by Édouard Balladur, to recognize the authority of the government formed by Faustin Twagiramungu, as well as the idea that the arrest of what the EMP calls “the criminals” - and not the *genocidaires* - is not part of the mandate entrusted to Operation Turquoise. The soldiers should simply pass on their information to the UN.²⁸⁸ It should be noted that the question of the arrest of *genocidaires* is developed in Chapter 6 of this report. For the EMP, in any case, the arrest, or not, of the *genocidaires* is a subject that comes up several times in the memos of July 1994. There is a shift in terminology, so the memos speak first of “criminals” and then of “acts of genocide” as of 9 July, using the UN expression. Above all, there is a clear desire to continually remind people that Turquoise soldiers do not have a mandate to make arrests, but that they will collaborate fully with the United Nations. The EMP returned to this question on 9 July, 1994²⁸⁹ and again on 18 July 1994, when it notes that “Mr. Balladur excludes our forces from carrying out police work in the humanitarian zone in order to deliver presumed criminals to the RPF.”²⁹⁰ It should be noted that the Prime Minister’s refusal, as reported by the head of the EMP, does not concern a refusal to arrest the *genocidaires*, as such, but to hand them over to the RPF.

Despite Paul Kagame’s good intentions, as reported in the memo of 6 July, 1994, and the Prime Minister’s satisfaction with the evolution of his attitude²⁹¹, the EMP’s hostility towards him and the RPF is clear in the terms and expressions used. The very next day, 7 July, 1994, General Quesnot denounced the allegations made in the French press that Operation Turquoise was facilitating the armed infiltration of RPF soldiers into the SHZ, which he described as “the fantasies of journalists who, for various reasons, are calling for confrontations that we are doing everything we can to avoid.”²⁹² The head of the EMP is concerned about the risk of a suspicion of collusion of French troops with the RPF. He reported that, on the contrary, the two armies were facing each other in the north of the SHZ, which provoked a show of force orchestrated by General Lafourcade, who “ordered his detachment to visibly demonstrate its presence and asked General Dallaire, commander of UNAMIR,

to intervene with the RPF to stop this advance. The message was received and the advance stopped.”²⁹³ On 11 July, 1994, he was pleased to see that the press was changing its mind about the RPF: “Some journalists are beginning to discover the ‘hidden face’ of the RPF, whose advance is emptying the country and is accompanied by selective massacres.”²⁹⁴ The expression “selective massacres” raises questions, especially since, while he reports what others have said about criminals and acts of genocide, as we have seen, he himself does not describe the violence committed against the Tutsi as genocide. General Quesnot seems to be repeating the terminology he used in 1993,²⁹⁵ referring to the RPF program as the implementation of “ethnic cleansing” against the Hutu. In any case, he lost no opportunity to document for the President of the Republic the violence perpetrated by the RPF on the population of the camps and the Hutu refugees. Thus, on 18 July he informed François Mitterrand that the RPF had carried out “mortar attacks on the town of Goma, in Zaire, killing 60 to 100 civilians.”²⁹⁶ He mentioned a “clash” with French forces and, above all, returned to the RPF’s supposed program of “emptying the country of the rest of its population in order to redistribute the land to the Tutsi, for whom the Hutu peasants would become the farmers.”²⁹⁷ The head of EMP and the Africa advisor are once again espousing the idea of the link between “ethnicity” and “social class” established by the colonizers. According to them, Paul Kagame’s objective would be to return to the situation before the 1959 revolution, where a minority of aristocrats would crush the peasant majority under their domination. But the authors mention an additional objective, which is to hurt national pride, namely “to humiliate us”²⁹⁸ and to discredit Turquoise.

In July 1994, the EMP did not think the genocide in progress, it did not measure the magnitude of the tragedy experienced by the Tutsi of Rwanda: its regrets focused on the victory of the RPF, the suffering of the refugees in the camps, the impossibility of a reconciliation of society, without taking into account that a million people had just died, killed by their own neighbors. On 20 July 1994, General Quesnot wrote to the President of the Republic that the RPF’s victory was total. Acknowledging that he was stepping out of his role, he wrote that, with regard to the new government, “on a personal level, it does not seem to me to be politically urgent

to rush into anything.”²⁹⁹ According to him, this success will lead to instability in the Great Lakes region because of the organization of a well-armed Hutu “external resistance” capable of destabilizing the new power.³⁰⁰ The comparison with the 1939-1945 war is more explicit - but also more surprising in its wording and context - when the EMP reports to François Mitterrand the UNHCR’s assessment that “the tragedy being experienced by the millions of Hutu refugees and displaced persons grouped together in northern Kivu and southwestern Rwanda surpasses in horror anything the world has known since the Second World War.”

The disengagement of Operation Turquoise was the subject of a new memo dated 13 August, 1994, in preparation for a new meeting with Prime Minister Édouard Balladur.³⁰¹ General Quesnot set out the various plausible hypotheses concerning the withdrawal scheduled for 21 August 1994, the date on which UNAMIR II would be installed. For the head of the EMP, the success of the withdrawal is conditional on “the arrival of the Ethiopian battalion in the Cyangugu region to ensure our ultimate relief and the credibility of UNAMIR II with the population”³⁰² and on “the establishment of a sufficient food flow to fix the population in place.”³⁰³ The diplomatic efforts underway on these subjects are described as “vigorous.” The major fear was the resumption of the exodus of populations, particularly to Zaire, due to RPF reprisals against Hutu refugees in the SHZ and being forced to remain in Rwanda under international pressure:

We will be confronted with one of the 3 following hypotheses:

- *Relief on 21 August by the Ethiopian battalion, brief instructions and no mass exodus, this would be the best but the most unlikely,*
- *Departure on 21 August without the arrival of the Ethiopian battalion, but redeployment of the UNAMIR present: Inter-African and Ghanaian battalions. The risk of violence is real and will lead to an exodus of the population,*
- *Maintaining Turquoise in the Cyangugu region for some time to respond to international pressure (particularly American). This last hypothesis would require a decision by the UN, the agreement of the Rwandan government, and the acceptance of our conditions in order to fulfill the mission.*³⁰⁴

Even if General Quesnot is wary of “the propaganda of the Hutu extremists,” he once again expresses his deep hostility towards Paul Kagame and the RPF, whom he assumes wish to disrupt the “honorability” of our withdrawal.³⁰⁵ The EMP leader is pessimistic:

The RPF, like its leader General Kagame, is cold and calculating, ignores the human factor and wants all the power. Sectarian and intransigent, it appeals to international opinion through clever political propaganda maneuvers relayed by a brilliant diaspora and which have a good impact in the Anglo-Saxon world.

It is undoubtedly in favor of an exodus of refugees from the SHZ to Zaire in order to recover an empty zone where he can, as in the rest of Rwanda, proceed with a selective redistribution of land and accuse us of having encouraged the Hutus to flee their country.³⁰⁶

It is noteworthy that a handwritten note to this memo indicates “not seen by the PR.” The one of 18 August, 1994, in any case, bears the Mitterrandian “seen.” It shows that the disengagement of Turquoise followed the scenario preferred by the French and the planned timetable, i.e. the transfer of the Gikongoro sector to the Ghanaians and that of Kibuye to the French-speaking African battalion, while the Ethiopians were preparing to take over that of Cyangugu on 20 August: “By the evening of 21 August, the 350 soldiers still present in Rwanda should have left the country.”³⁰⁷ The authors of this memo do not note any mass exodus to Goma, citing the contrary opinion of NGOs. The position of the French at the time of this withdrawal was particularly uncomfortable, as they were faced with contradictory positions from the international community and NGOs on the one hand, and the RPF on the other. The former “are pressuring us to keep the Turquoise detachment in Rwanda for a few weeks. The Americans, in particular, seem to want to blame us in advance for an exodus that would occur after our departure.”³⁰⁸ This last sentence, underlined in the original document, is accompanied by a “!” in the margin. The authors of the memo consider this position “unacceptable” and finally criticize the hypocrisy, according to them, of the United States which “does not exert any real pressure on the new Rwandan government, to which it is close, to do what is necessary to avoid a new exodus.”³⁰⁹ On the other hand, the new Rwandan government is urging French troops to leave the SHZ, while Paul Kagame is opposed to French logistical support from Zaire for the African battalions integrated into UNAMIR II. The position of the new regime in Kigali is presented as particularly opportunistic. On

the one hand, it “seeks to discredit Operation Turquoise, even at the cost of a new exodus,” while on the other, it wants to maintain diplomatic relations with France, which “in the words of the new Rwandan ambassador in New York, “must participate in the reconstruction of a country that it helped to ruin.”³¹⁰ In any case, the EMP was aware of the weakness of its position, particularly in terms of communication, and wanted to publish a communiqué stating that the departure of the French forces had taken place in spite of the UN and the United States and because of the opposition of the government in Kigali. On 25 August, 1994, the last memo on Rwanda in the EMP archives was a message of congratulations to François Léotard “for the exemplary conduct of Operation “Turquoise.”³¹¹ Until the end of 1994, the EMP no longer addresses the subject of Rwanda.

7.1.7.4 THE EMP, A DISCREET SYSTEM OF INFLUENCE, PRESSURE AND DISINFORMATION

General Jean-Pierre Huchon, “Deputy Chief of Staff of the President of the Republic” as his business cards indicate, sends letters - often accompanied by documents - to ministerial authorities directly in charge of the Rwandan file, as well as messages to those who are active on the ground and represent France in Rwanda. These mailings deviate from the official circuit of administrative correspondence. Thus, the mails and messages of Colonel and then General Huchon are not registered, nor do they pass through the General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic, through which the correspondence of the advisors with the ministries theoretically passes. They are addressed directly to agents of the State in order to influence them and even to demand that they align themselves with the policy of the Élysée. Although destined not to be preserved, since they were produced in an irregular manner, some of these EMP archives were found by the Research Commission, which drew up a list of these documents. The latter is only partial, since it depends on the random conservation of incoming mail, while outgoing mail, if any duplicates have been kept, cannot be found, like all of the EMP’s operating archives.³¹² The disappearance of these archives is all the more problematic

as there is ample evidence of the irregular activities of this institution.

Two sets of documents were found in the archives of the recipients of these unofficial and confidential messages. They concern, on the one hand, documents sent with a handwritten explanation on a large business card to officials of the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs for the period 1991-1993; on the other hand, faxes sent to the first defense attaché in Kigali (for the period October 1990-June 1991).

The collection of confidential and non-procedural shipments of documents includes the following items:

1991. To the attention of Mr. Paul DIJOU. ³¹³ Dear Minister, I am attaching unofficially a report from Lt Col CHOLLET, commander of the DAMI in RUHENGERI. His assessment, seen from a man on the ground, seems interesting to me. I hope that no mention of this text will be made to Min Def. Respectfully.

1992. Mrs. Boivineau. Confidential. Dear Minister. I am sending you this small file to shed some light on the situation of the Rwandan armed forces. You will immediately understand, upon reading these memos, that the Rwandan Army cannot be asked to "stick" to the border, otherwise it will be crushed by the mortars firing from UGANDA. The current dilemma is simple:

- either we neutralize the Ugandan mortars (either by entering Uganda, or by making a precise counter-battery, provided we have anti-mortar trajectory radars that instantly render [?] the origin of the shots) and the Army goes to the border,

- or the Rwandan army sets up at a distance from the border, out of mortar range (5 to 7 km), but then the RPF has a free zone on the Rwandan side of the border.

Conclusion: your ambassadors are right to ask for trajectory radars. First, they can be used by the MOF³¹⁴ to prove the Ugandan origin of the shooting. Secondly, they can be given to the Rwandans who will adjust their counter-battery fire (an unpleasant surprise for the RPF!). Respectfully.³¹⁵

1993. [19 February] Mr. de la Sablière. Mr. Director, For your information. Extremely instructive reading for local history and situation. Yours sincerely.³¹⁶

[27 February] Mr. de la Sablière. Mr. Director, For your information. Yours sincerely.³¹⁷

As Bruno Delaye's official title - "*presidential advisor*" - shows, there is no "Africa unit" at the Élysée, but only a few people in charge of questions concerning France's African policy, a particularly sensitive subject for François Mitterrand. These two or three people did not belong to the diplomatic unit, and they were quickly overtaken by the personal military staff, according to the Élysée's adage at the time, "when things get serious, the military takeover."³¹⁸

François Mitterrand's first two Africa advisors were close to him through political commitment or family ties. Between 1981 and 1986, Guy Penne held the position and was assisted, from 1983, by Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, the President's eldest son. Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, who did not provide the relevant services with any archives, succeeded him and remained an advisor until July 1992. He was then replaced by a diplomat, Bruno Delaye, former ambassador to Lomé, whose archives are present in the François Mitterrand collection at the National Archives. In some of the handwritten letters in this collection, Bruno Delaye refers to himself or is referred to as "advisor for African and Malagasy Affairs," the name of the competent department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The advisor took up his duties on 20 July, 1992, and one month later requested the recruitment, on secondment, of young executives from the Quai d'Orsay and the Cooperation Department: Dominique Pin, number two at the embassy in Kinshasa, and Georges Serre.³¹⁹

A memo of 5 April 1993 describes the functioning of interministerial dialogue on Africa before the cohabitation. It was based on regular informal meetings to exchange information - every Wednesday afternoon at the Africa unit -, on formal meetings at the Quai d'Orsay when a problem required a political decision - a decision then formalized by the Cabinet of the minister who had obtained the opinion of the Presidency and the main ministers concerned -, and finally on the holding of core cabinet meetings in the event of a crisis, as was the case on several occasions concerning Rwanda. This organization, which the advisor praised for its "transparency and harmony,"³²⁰ was only slightly challenged by the cohabitation. As Édouard Balladur explained to the Quilès mission,

the weekly meeting was henceforth held alternately at the Élysée and at Matignon, where Bernard de Montferrand, his diplomatic advisor, chaired the meeting, and core cabinet meetings were still frequent when important decisions had to be taken.³²¹ In times of crisis, the most important diplomatic telegrams were submitted to the Élysée for advice.

Bruno Delaye wrote memos to the President of the Republic, under the cover of the Secretary General Hubert Védrine, who annotated them briefly and pointed out to the President the points that seemed important to him. From December 1992, he also wrote “Weekly Points on Africa.” Among the memos reported by Hubert Védrine, two offer an analysis of the Right’s relations with Africa: the first, written shortly before the cohabitation, describes the existence of “multiple teams, multiple points of view” and emphasizes “the desire to distinguish oneself” in terms of African policy;³²² the second, written on 5 May, 1994, details at length the “divisions and network struggles” of this political family.³²³

The Africa unit is an autonomous structure, but observation of the signatures on the memos, sometimes signed jointly, reveals a growing closeness to the special staff (EMP), or at least the withdrawal of the unit behind the military approach in times of crisis. In April 1992, the advisor Thierry de Beaucé, who worked alongside Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, reacted to a memo from General Quesnot, chief of staff, with these words: “General, amended but amendable. Shouldn’t we ask ourselves, like the ambassador [Georges Martres], about our assistance to the Presidential Guard?”³²⁴ In 1993, there were only a few memos on Rwanda signed jointly by Bruno Delaye and General Quesnot, four on the letterhead of the advisor, none on EMP letterhead. These memos with two signatures are much more numerous in 1994, more than 15%. They almost exclusively concern the period of Operation Turquoise and are written on the letterheads of the two institutions. At the same time, the analyses of the Rwandan question, proposed by Bruno Delaye in his own name, are increasingly in line with the theses defended by General Quesnot.

A final question can be asked about the liberty that the Africa advisor allows himself in his analyses: does he play the role of a critical advisor

or does he write what he thinks is the president's thinking on this or that subject? While it is not possible to answer this question precisely, one can observe a certain admiration for François Mitterrand, an admiration that sometimes leads to flattery. On 25 October, 1993, in a memo to Hubert Védrine, Bruno Delaye wrote: "During the Francophonie summit, the President of the Republic appeared to be the only true connoisseur of African realities and the only one capable of bringing together 'the family'."³²⁵ On 31 January, 1994, while preparing a speech by François Mitterrand on the issue of development and proposing a framework and modalities, he praised the President: "Since General de Gaulle, you are the only head of state with a true African dimension. Your African peers recognize this as such, unlike all other Western heads of State or contemporary French political leaders."³²⁶

7.1.7.6 FROM A MILITARY CABINET TO FIELD ACTION

A collection of confidential faxes, some marked "To be destroyed after reading," was found by the Research Commission at the *Service historique de la défense*. These messages originate from the fax numbers of the Élysée and are addressed to the defense attaché in Kigali.³²⁷ At the beginning, Colonel Galinié made a point of responding to requests from the Élysée, even though they did not go through the hierarchy. Gradually, doubts arose in the defense attaché's mind about the substance of the requests as well as the form. Colonel Huchon put all his weight behind obtaining from Colonel Galinié, whom he knew personally and with whom he had a long-standing friendship, evidence that was consistent with his thesis of an external attack, the only way to justify a strong French commitment to President Habyarimana. This commitment took shape in an emergency and on a massive scale, with a command from the Élysée that was quite obvious, insistent and intended to be concealed - the form of the instructions testifying to this.

19 October, 1990³²⁸

President Habyarimana told our authority last night that the credits for the 90 mm ammunition [ill.] had been in place since the morning of 18 October in France. It turns out that this is not true. We have planned a plane tomorrow morning

to take these shells, which are to be brought from Lyon to Orleans. It is urgent that we know where this money has gone [...]

*24 October*³²⁹

*1. This morning's meeting went well. The line of conduct remains the same: resolute but discreet help.*³³⁰

2. The improvement of the image of the Rwandan government should be pursued by making an effort in 2 priority directions (but not exclusive of the others).

21. Show the French-speaking media, including those with a Belgian impact, that 4/5 of the country is calm and that, on the contrary, the only troubled area is the one held by the Ugandan-Tutsi offensive. The theme to be favored: "you can see that this is not a rebellion of the country, it is an external aggression." Arrange for journalists to visit the provinces.

22. Make a real effort to show evidence of the Ugandan origin of the attack...

3. Friendships. Item 22 is urgent and important to me.

This is followed by faxes of 25 October, 1990,³³¹ 27 October, 1990,³³² 28 October, 1990,³³³ and 31 October, 1990.³³⁴ Colonel Huchon urged the defense attaché to contribute to the propaganda enterprise against the RPF and to provide the means to do so, demanding that he look for "proof" of Uganda's participation in the 1 October offensive and of its massive support for the RPA. The word "proof" is indeed framed by quotation marks. They are affixed by Colonel Huchon in the fax quoted on 27 October. Does this mean that the Deputy Chief of Staff knows full well that there is no evidence of the strong involvement of Uganda, and that it would be a matter of fabricating it, or at least of giving a very univocal presentation of certain inconclusive elements? One is entitled to ask this question, especially since he specifies what he expects from the defense attaché, which is not limited to demonstrating "external aggression." The manipulation must also extend to the internal domain by disguising the desired democratization in Rwanda. The "few points not to be missed" following the victory of the FAR over the RPF must organize the maneuver that can be described as disinformation:

Magnanimous treatment of prisoners, with visits by humanitarian aid workers to discredit any lies by the opposing side,

Presentation to the international press of "proof" of the external aggression, prisoners in Ugandan uniforms, irrefutable documents, materials with marks of origin (note: this point raises reservations among our pro-Libyan supporters. Be discreet).

Political openness towards opposition figures on the theme: "Now that foreign aggression has been repelled, let us discuss our future together."

Transparency of "democratic" intentions.

What Colonel Huchon demanded of Colonel Galinié in this "personal and confidential" fax of 27 October, 1990, transmitted from the telephone lines of the Élysée and to be "destroyed after reading," could be likened to the practices of an "officine". The fax of 25 October was already very insistent on the maneuver undertaken, of which Colonel Galinié had to be an accomplice: "We absolutely need to explain to international opinion [beginning of sentence underlined] that this is indeed an offensive by the Ugandan army (deserters or not) and not an armed rebellion. Otherwise, we are going to be put at odds and be obliged, politically speaking, to align ourselves with the Belgians." This fax, still "to be destroyed after reading," clearly implies that the objective sought was French involvement in Rwanda, which only a threat of external aggression could justify. If it was not (and this was the case), it was enough to convince international opinion that this was the reality, and to find the evidence to demonstrate it.

The defense attaché in Kigali finds himself in a conflict of loyalty between the ethics of truth and the principle of obedience. He is strongly solicited by Colonel Huchon, who is not his hierarchical superior, by means of direct and suspicious communications, for a most troublesome mission, contrary to the ethics of the officer and his attachment to the Republic. Did Colonel Galinié resolve the conflict by deciding to leave his post at the beginning of the summer of 1991?

The DGSE was also under pressure from the EMP to provide evidence of Uganda's involvement. General Quesnot himself demanded that a mission be sent to the area, as already mentioned. The deputy director of operations provided him with the elements collected by the "mission T."³³⁵ which concluded that there were no massive and proven facts. The DGSE report did not change the view of the case as communicated by the head of the EMP to the President of the Republic. On 21 May 1991, the last known fax from Colonel Huchon asked Colonel Galinié to provide him with "any identification element that would allow the origin of the SAM 16 found in the Akagera to be traced."³³⁶

In addition to characterizing the practices observed at the EMP, they raise questions about the ability of Generals Huchon and Quesnot to fulfill their role as advisors to the President of the Republic. However, the latter does not have authority over the officers of his personal military staff.

7.1.7.7 FROM EMP TO MILITARY COOPERATION. AN ENTERPRISE OF FUNCTIONAL AND IDEOLOGICAL INTEGRATION INTO THE ÉLYSÉE SYSTEM

The absence of archives constituted by the MMC during the time that General Huchon was its chief, limits the knowledge that can be gained. After the withdrawal of Colonel Galinié, the eviction of General Varret from the MMC led to an alignment of this directorate with the EMP. General Varret was opposed to the direct intervention of the Élysée in cooperation and fought to retain control of military cooperation, as the institutions gave him the mission. As head of the MMC, General Huchon put military cooperation at the service of a policy in Rwanda that justified going beyond procedures and even changing them, thanks to the powers conferred by the Élysée authority. A radicalization of the MMC followed after the departure of General Varret, as the analysis below of General Huchon's memos on Rue Monsieur reveals.

7.1.7.8 THE EMA'S AFRICA UNIT: A REPLICAS OF THE EMP AT THE SERVICE OF THE CEMA?

With Colonel Delort, whom Admiral Lanxade appointed as Africa advisor, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces has a smaller-scale replica of the EMP. One of the preferred sectors of intervention is Rwanda, as with the EMP. A study of a series of messages sent between May and June 1993 by the incumbent of the post provides information on the activity, indeed the activism, of the Africa advisor on Rwanda. These messages reach a whole series of well-chosen interlocutors, but often outside the normal hierarchical connections, making it possible to highlight an effort to influence in order to reinforce a dramatic reading of the RPF and the Arusha accords.

At the time of the memos studied, Colonel Delort had returned from Rwanda, where he had held one of the highest operational positions, commanding

the “French forces in Rwanda.” When the RPF launched a new offensive in February 1993, he was urgently dispatched to the field, with authority over all French military personnel, including those working in the cooperation. With the benefit of a “personal and secret instruction” (IPS) signed by Admiral Lanxade, he was given great powers, in all legality, since the military situation authorized the EMA to relieve the defense attaché of his command responsibilities, including those of the cooperation personnel (AMT). Colonel Delort’s command led him to protect the city of Kigali and to perform checks at its gates, something that the first defense attaché had refused to do to President Habyarimana, who had asked him to do so.³³⁷

Colonel Delort left Rwanda on 26 March, 1993. He returned to his position as advisor to the CEMA. His involvement in the Rwandan dossier was strengthened by his experience as commander-in-chief of combat units, whose presence and maneuvering were essential to the FAR to stop the RPF offensive on Byumba. His written work testifies to this reinforced involvement and his concern to defend the logic of the French military intervention in Rwanda. Thus, on 7 May, 1993, he reports on the meeting organized between the RPF representatives in Europe and the Director of African and Malagasy Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jean-Marc de La Sablière.³³⁸ The purpose of this memo was firstly to eliminate the RPF’s argument that France did not want contact with its representatives and secondly to send the message that France would not accept the overthrow of the legal regime in Kigali. This was both a threat to continue the French military build-up in Rwanda and an invitation to become more involved in the negotiation process. Following this report, the colonel proposes an “editor’s opinion” by way of “commentary, as is customary in this type of report. In this opinion, he comments: “The RPF representative remained faithfully within the political line set by his movement. This shows once again the monolithism of these neo-Marxists.”³³⁹ The colonel chooses a vocabulary connoting shifted patterns. Thus, the theme of neo-Marxism explicitly refers to a return to the Cold War schema to describe a movement seen by the French post in Kigali as the symbol of Anglo-Saxon influence with a military leader

trained in the United States. At the same time, the commentary is also a sign of disappointment, as if it was expected that the RPF would show a willingness to come together on the occasion of this contact. The effect of the notice seems to have been successful, since the head of the Armed Forces (EMA) Chief of Staff's cabinet, who is a reader of the memo, as well as the General Major, No. 2 of the EMA, comments in handwriting, "considering that it is not very encouraging."³⁴⁰ In this memo, a mode of action can be highlighted: the staging of the radicalism of the RPF in order to better contribute to making them negotiating partners to whom one would not want to concede anything.

This mode of action was repeated a few weeks later, no longer directed at the French military hierarchy, but at the deputy director for Central and Eastern Africa, Catherine Boivineau.³⁴¹ The message, dated 1 June, 1993, broke all the rules of administrative correspondence, which would have required that the mail go through the Chief of Defense Staff at best, and ideally through the Director of the Cabinet of the Ministry of Defense, and then be addressed to the Secretary General of the Quai d'Orsay before it reached the Deputy Director. The latter was informed in an irregular and therefore confidential manner of a letter from the RPF to the Rwandan Prime Minister in which the RPF denounced not only the accusations made against it but above all the human rights violations that were allegedly taking place in Rwanda. In its letter, the RPF asks the Rwandan Prime Minister to take a stand. The information it provides to the diplomat is intended to emphasize that the RPF is in a tougher negotiating position since it points to "inadmissible violations of the agreements"³⁴² by the government. The colonel was simply passing on information in his possession to a diplomat working on the case. However, a week later, he sent head of the Defense staff's cabinet a new report that explicitly called for President Habyarimana to be put back in the game because of the RPF's positions. On 10 June, Colonel Delort wrote a handwritten memo whose subject was "a dangerous agreement."³⁴³ Based on an RFI report that announced a 50/50 split in the command of the armed forces between the FAR and the RPF, he pointed out that this was an unacceptable condition for "part of the army (the effective part)"³⁴⁴ and therefore carried the risk of a coup. In order to avoid this, he believes

that President Habyarimana must be put back in the conversation so that he in turn puts pressure on the army. If the colonel rightly sensed that part of the FAR was in danger of becoming radicalized against the RPF and the Arusha Accords, he used this as an instrument to put President Habyarimana back in the game.

In an undated memo sent to the defense attaché in Addis Ababa, Colonel Delort develops on two handwritten pages what he defines as “personal remarks.” These remarks are supposed to be a response to a document sent by his correspondent: “Here are some personal remarks for the document that was sent to us. You can use them without committing the institution as advice to a fellow Francophone.”³⁴⁵ If the first document has not been found in the archives, Colonel Delort’s reply shows that it is a message concerning the future group of neutral military observers (GOMN) in charge of applying the Arusha agreements concerning the demilitarized zone between the RPF and the FAR in northern Rwanda. While the colonel rightly emphasized the need to specify the mission and operating methods of the observer group, he noted several points that he considered dangerous, starting with the fact that the group was being led by a person who was not “French-speaking,” and that he would like to see “a Senegalese person” there. Similarly, he wanted to make sure that the GOMN would not be located in the town of Byumba, where an “important FAR headquarters” was located.³⁴⁶ These remarks were to be concealed from the parties involved in the negotiations. The instruction is clear: the institution, i.e. the French army and the French embassy, must not be “committed.” It is therefore a matter of strengthening, through this advice, the position of the Rwandan government vis-à-vis the RPF. The officer suggests that the Arusha Accords are not an opportunity for France to allow a renewal of power in Rwanda by putting an end to a civil war, but rather to prolong a confrontation and a balance of power. To this Rwandan reading of what was played out in Arusha, one must add an essential key: the Francophonie, which is mentioned three times in the memo. Thus, the Rwandan representatives are referred to as “French-speaking comrades,” while it is necessary that the head of GOMN be relieved by a “French speaker.” And Colonel Delort

warns: we must be “more careful about the relative weight of Nigeria in a French-speaking country.”³⁴⁷ Rwanda is thus described as the territory of a direct confrontation between the French-speaking world and the English-speaking world, and therefore the strengthening of the positions of the Rwandan government is part of a struggle for the Francophone space.

Over a two-month period, the man who was the commander of Operation *Noroît* from February to March 1993, and who was a discreet French observer at the Arusha Accords, accompanied by signallers from the 1st RPIMa,³⁴⁸ appears to be the producer of a powerful argument on the unfriendliness of the RPF, which is both a reminder of the Eastern bloc and the embodiment of a form of negation of the French-speaking world in Rwanda, i.e., a Trojan horse of the English-speaking world. This vision of the radical nature of the RPF, which then fueled the radicalization of Hutu extremists within the Rwandan army, drastically limited French political choices at a time when an alternative was being sought: opposition to the RPF was the condition for keeping the radical Hutu under control. The analyses developed by Colonel Delort make it impossible to give legitimacy to a power-sharing solution.

These analyses are the product of a representation that largely predates the Arusha accords. The vision of the impossibility of an agreement between the RPF and the Rwandan State insofar as it would be the representation of the Hutu living within the borders of Rwanda is at the heart of the analyses that he has been developing for the benefit of the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces for many months already. As early as 17 June, 1992, on his return from an expert mission to Rwanda, he contrasted the zone controlled by the RPF with the rest of the country, pointing out that “8/10 of the country lives in peace, that the population, which is large, works calmly and with a certain fatalism that is characteristic of this peasant world, as opposed to an ethnic group that is by nature more warlike.”³⁴⁹ The monolithic reading by ethnic group associated with a characteristic: violent warrior or calm and fatalistic peasant, not only prevents the emergence of a political analysis of the balance of power, but also invites the neglect of major elements such as the racist radicalization within the circles of Hutu power in Kigali, or, at the very least, to see them only as an incidental phenomenon linked to the RPF, as Colonel Delort pointed out in June 1993.³⁵⁰

7.1.7.9 JUSTIFYING THE CENTRALITY OF EMA IN THE INDIRECT STRATEGY THE TAUZIN REPORT OF 2 APRIL, 1993

On 2 April, 1993, the commanding officer of the 1st RPIMa wrote a six-page summary report, classified as a defense secret, and distributed in four copies, one of which was archived in the regiment in Bayonne, and the other three sent to the Armed Forces headquarters in Paris.³⁵¹ The report describes the mission he carried out from 22 February to 28 March, taking charge of the reinforcement of the DAMI by numerous elements from his regiment, which he personally led. The operational model is that of the June-July 1992 intervention led by Colonel Tauzin's predecessor, Colonel Rosier. First of all, it involved the reinforcement of operational support on technical aspects: the DAMI Génie was given the mission of advising the three sector commanders in turn on the defensive organization of the terrain; the DAMI Artillery was maintained in its mission of advising the 122D 30 and 105 mm batteries.

In addition to this technical reinforcement, there is support for the command and management. On this point, Colonel Tauzin is very clear, both about the mission and the results. The mission entrusted to him by Colonel Delort is

To raise the technical operational level of the FAR staff and of at least two sector commands [...].

- My objective is to help the FAR to recover, to stop the RPF breakthrough towards Kigali, and to reduce the threat to the Byumba sector.

So for my detachment, it is a matter of indirectly supervising an army of about 22,000 men, and for me to command it, again indirectly. [...]

After having contacted the Chief of Staff of the FAR and conducted a helicopter reconnaissance of the most threatened sectors, I placed a team of officer advisors with the FAR staff on the morning of the 23rd, and then, on the 24th, a team of advisor-instructors with each of the commanders of the sectors of Rubengeri, Rulindo and Byumba, [...].

In the opinion of DAMI personnel and in the opinion of the Rwandan officers themselves, the only FAR units that performed well in combat were those that had been trained by DAMI Panda for more than two years; four of these units, foremost among them the Para Battalion, performed very well.

Colonel Tauzin's mission was therefore both very precise and very broad, and responded to the urgency of the RPF offensive, to French awareness of the military weakness of the FAR, and to the general concern to maintain the balance of power within the framework of negotiations between the RPF and the Rwandan government. As the colonel pointed out, the mission led to the French forces moving considerably closer to the front. The three sector teams, the DAMI Engineers and the DAMI Artillery operated in close, often immediate proximity to the contacts. The risks they ran - ambushes by infiltrators, artillery fire in particular - were very real throughout the operation; most of them were also caught at least once under enemy fire; but their great dilution on the whole front, the correct use of the terrain and the strict application of the security instructions issued made it possible to avoid any damage, apart from a slight wounding during enemy fire which led to a response from the French side.

On the strength of this accomplishment, Colonel Tauzin emphasized that the success of this operation was a question of method: "The overall cost (financial, human, media) of this indirect strategy operation seems to me to be extremely low in relation to the results obtained, and in comparison to what the cost of a direct engagement against the RPF would have been." This reminder may seem to be in keeping with the tradition of French intervention in Rwanda. However, it is in fact a demonstration of the EMA's ability to design and conduct this type of operation. The report is intended only for the EMA, the employment division, the external relations division and the new special operations command. It does not go back to the Cooperation Division, to which the DAMI reports. Since Colonel Tauzin's mission was requested by Colonel Delort, who himself acted for Admiral Lanxade, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, this report should be seen not only as a report, as any military leader produces, but also as a demonstration of the capacity of the EMA, without Cooperation, to conduct this type of operation directly. This report therefore also seems to be part of an attempt by the EMA to take more direct control of French operations in Rwanda, and thus to demonstrate a desire for autonomy with respect to all other French actors in the Rwandan dossier. And, in fact, to try

to counter the omnipotence of the President of the Republic's personal military staff on the dossier.

7.1.8 THE PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC, RWANDA AND THE PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL MILITARY STAFF JUSTIFIED QUESTIONS

Acting militarily in Rwanda is a major concern of the French President. As we have seen, there are many reasons for this. They stem as much from François Mitterrand's personal relationship with General-President Juvénal Habyarimana as from a global strategic imagination, in which Rwanda is as much a laboratory confine as a forward march engaged in major power struggles between the French-speaking and Anglo-Saxon worlds. Thus, while being, all in all, one concern among others for French foreign affairs, Rwanda occupies a place of prominence that puts it directly at the center of the French Presidency's attention.

The regular, even permanent intervention of the Presidency of the Republic in the military support of President Habyarimana is attested to by numerous official or unofficial documents of varying origin. They explicitly mention the role, depending on the case, of the President of the Republic, the Élysée, General Quesnot, and General Huchon, who acted in his name and brought "the Élysée" entity to the field. This capacity for intervention, concrete and powerful, which a series of sources mention precisely, owes its strength to the organization of the personal military staff on which it is necessary to focus. This service seems to have become a direct actor in the Rwandan dossier, through irregular practices. But this is not a factional system within the presidency, questioning a democratic functioning, with officers who would take control of the political decision on a field of intervention, such as Rwanda. They obey the first elected official of the Republic. No document shows that the head of state was willing to sanction these military officers or to restrain them in their initiatives.

Following the French engagement in Rwanda in October 1990, which we have seen was personally decided by François Mitterrand with

his chief of personal military staff, the EMP officials appeared to be the guarantors of the presidential will and project, but also of its execution, thus marginalizing the institutions legally in charge of operational command, the Armed Forces Staff, and the Military Cooperation Mission. The year 1991 was the year in which the French system was established for the long term in Rwanda. It was also the year in which parallel links, direct communications and therefore intelligence, but also influence, were established - as the rest of the chapter attests. It is immediately apparent that the EMP followed the Rwanda dossier very closely, putting in place communication mechanisms with the field to do so. The very opening of communication channels linking the field to the Élysée - for the EMP is in fact only the gateway to the entire Élysée and thus to the head of state - is a source of considerable pressure for French officials and soldiers in the field.

Since Rwanda was a dossier that was closely followed by the French presidency, but also increasingly complex from 1992 onwards, we can observe the occasional but very strong, even decisive, involvement of the chief of personal military staff at certain crucial moments. This involvement has a political value that is directly linked to the authority on which it depends. As is customary, a trip by the CEMP allows the President of the Republic to send direct messages to his foreign counterparts and, at the same time, is a clear sign for all actors of the President's commitment to the issue. Thus, in the French management of Rwandan issues, the EMP has always appeared as the institution that pointed the direction in which the president wished to go and, at the same time, was the main institution for interpreting the presidential will, giving it considerable weight, which has never been denied, or almost never been denied, by all the other actors, both French and foreign.

Notwithstanding the obvious connection between the EMP and the President of the Republic, whom it advises, but also whose expression, if not interpretation, it assures in many French institutions, there have been, in the case of Rwanda but also more generally, virulent criticisms of this articulation between political power and the administrations. It is thus possible to distinguish several salient points in the action

of the EMP on the Rwandan dossier. First, the EMP appears to be a pole with strong apparent autonomy in a system where presidential control is very strong. Secondly, it appears to exercise precise, close surveillance over all the actors in the case, in particular by being part of the communication networks that link the Élysée to the Rwandan terrain. This situation, in which the EMP is placed, with the consent of the President of the Republic, in the role of a very active relay of public action, has not been without radical discussion within the French executive. Thus, in 1993, Pierre Joxe crudely raised the question of responsibility in a system where the president delegates to the military functions that are profoundly political in nature, even though the latter cannot assume them in the same way as ministers can and must.

7.1.8.1 STRONG AUTONOMY OF THE EMP IN A SYSTEM OF STRONG PRESIDENTIAL CONTROL

The strong autonomy of the EMP could not have existed without the formal agreement or tacit endorsement of the President of the Republic, whose attachment to his prerogatives and authority is well known. It is not certain, however, that François Mitterrand was informed of the parallel service practices of his EMP, nor was the secretary general, whose role it is, by function, to oversee the presidency of the Republic. In fact, the authority exercised by the general secretariat over the personal military staff is less obvious, since tradition grants a large autonomy of operation to the “military cabinet” of the President of the Republic, which would be placed under his direct authority - although in second place in protocol, after the secretary general.

The EMP’s follow-up of the Rwandan dossier could not escape François Mitterrand either. Through his secretary general, he received all the memos on Rwanda from his chief of staff and/or the latter’s deputy, often co-signed by the advisor or deputy advisor. The “Memos for the attention of the President of the Republic” are the main, but not exclusive, channel through which the head of state’s collaborators keep him informed. In any case, this is the official channel that leads to the production

of written documents that have been preserved in a collection of the presidential fonds and *in situ* at the present EMP rue de l'Élysée.³⁵²

The President of the Republic was thus informed of the analysis of the dossier and benefited from the advice that the latter brought to the presidential decision. François Mitterrand sometimes annotated these standardized documents of one or two pages. In the absence of annotations, he often wrote “seen” to indicate that he had read them, and Hubert Védrine did not fail to indicate on certain memos, but also on other documents transmitted by the EMP, such as diplomatic telegrams: “read by the president.” It is very rare that the president returns the memos with a reservation about the analysis produced. In the absence of other accessible written elements, one can deduce that he adheres to the analysis of the case by his EMP, whose permanent hostility to one of the actors in the case and insistence on ever stronger military support for the Habyarimana regime have been noted. We have also noted the numerous errors of assessment and the geopolitics of the “enemy” (“Ugandan-Tutsi,” “Anglophone”) which limits the scope of the advisory function but which has the advantage of pleasing the Mitterrandian vision of France in the world. In this respect, Rwanda appears to be an international front line for France. Without question, the head of state informed his EMP of this, given the identity of strategic views. However, there is no record of such directives from the president to his subordinate.

The Secretary General of the Presidency is the person in direct and constant contact with the head of state. Hubert Védrine's memos show in the same way that nothing escaped François Mitterrand on the subject. Without being very numerous, they show that the subject is followed very closely by the secretary general and, in fact, by the president. The interventions of the latter in the select defense cabinet meeting still testify to his acuity on the subject and to the great firmness of his thinking on a subject which, according to him, does not lend itself to debate. However, this very committed vision is more or less the same as the one developed in the memos of the EMP and the Africa advisor who appears to be subordinate to him.

Along with François Mitterrand's public statements and the communiqués from the Élysée - which bear the stamp of the secretary general - the interventions in the core cabinet meeting are the only source, in the absence of memos from the President himself, of the presidential stamp on

the dossier. The rare decisions of François Mitterrand concerning the activities of his Chief of Staff, such as the one, at the suggestion of Hubert Védrine, to refuse General Quesnot's request to accompany the Minister of Defense François Léotard to Zaire and Rwanda on 29 June, 1994, for the meeting of Operation Turquoise,³⁵³ reflect the precision of his information and the attention paid to his Chief of Staff in the Rwandan dossier. This example allows us to conclude on the delegation of authority and signature that the EMP enjoys. When General Quesnot sent a memo to "the attention of the head of the military cabinet of the Minister of Defense" informing that "the President of the Republic has decided to send two additional companies to Rwanda as a matter of urgency,"³⁵⁴ he was transmitting a decision by the head of the armed forces, which was in response to a memo of the same day from Pierre Joxe to François Mitterrand questioning the appropriateness of sending these two companies.³⁵⁵ The memo from the EMP corresponded to a presidential decision, and the head of the army did not overturn it, meaning that an order had been given. To our knowledge, the archives do not mention any written document from François Mitterrand to General Quesnot. And yet the decision was taken and notified to a minister of State who found himself disavowed in his firm convictions. The communication of the President's decision to the EMP was thus done verbally.

7.1.8.2 THE ASSURANCE OF DIRECT ACTION ON THE GROUND

In theory, the *Élysée* does not intervene in the field, either in the deployment of units or in the ordering of arms. A whole series of institutions and government services are in charge of decisions that can be taken at the top, but within regulatory frameworks, the very ones that Pierre Joxe, as Minister of Defense, had tried to codify and rationalize. However, as the preceding chapters have abundantly shown, the "*Élysée*" exercises direct and permanent power over the French military engagement in Rwanda, right down to its material and operational aspects, as close to the ground as possible. One after the other, the documents found in the archives of the Cooperation Department, the Armed Forces Staff, and the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs attest to this weight of "the *Élysée*," whose name is often written explicitly, in connection with decisions that cannot be discussed, that are imposed by the very fact of the idea of unquestioned authority that attaches to the person in charge.

As soon as the RPF offensive began on 1 October 1990, the President of the Republic and the Chief of the General Staff committed themselves to military support for Rwanda which, although indirect and dissuasive, proved decisive. This commitment was reflected in the decision-making power of the Élysée, including the question of arms deliveries. A letter from Thomson Brandt addressed to the Ministry of Defense on 24 October 1990 attests to this. The decision chain goes from the order by the Élysée to its realization, the DGA and the MMC being only kept informed:

On Monday, 8 October, we were informed by the DGA/DRI, Mr. [...], and the MMC (Mission militaire de Coopération), that a message, originating from the Élysée, had been sent to them, for information, stipulating that 100 69 mm rockets for helicopters were to be placed at the disposal of the Armed Forces Staff for immediate shipment, by French military air transport to Rwanda. This information was confirmed to us by the office of the Minister of Defense (Colonel Fruchard). This type of rocket is not in service in the French army. Our company delivered 100 rockets to the Orleans Bricy base on 2 October 1990. We ask that you implement an order procedure with MMC so that it can make payment for the 100 rockets shipped.³⁵⁶

On 10 June, 1991, General Varret, the head of military cooperation, wrote to Colonel Galinié, who represented him in Rwanda as head of the military cooperation mission. He considered it necessary to “announce the departure of the DAMI in two parts as planned,” and he added clearly, recalling the anteriority of the problem:

If President Habyarimana is opposed to this application of the conditions for setting up the DAMI, it is likely that he will intervene with the French president. This intervention will be an opportunity to clarify the exact content of the promises made from president to president. If the decision to maintain the DAMI is taken at the level of the Élysée, you will tell me whether it is appropriate to relieve this unit or to extend its mission by one or two months.³⁵⁷

On the subject of the DAMI and the future of the Noroît operation, the EMA notes that the President of Rwanda has excellent relations with the Élysée and obtains - on his own initiative - the maintenance and even the reinforcement of French units.³⁵⁸ On the side of Cooperation, which in theory had authority over the deployment of forces, its legitimacy was broken in two stages. The defense attaché and head of MAM left his post at the beginning of July 1991, but not without having sent a message at the end of his mission, dated 19 June, 1991, emphasizing

the dangers of French alignment with President Habyarimana and the extremists who dominate him. In addition, a trip to Rwanda by the director of the DAM and the deputy to the EMP formalized the maintenance of the DAMI, as written by its chief on 26 July 1991. From that time on, General Varret was removed from Rwanda, which became the exclusive responsibility of the Élysée:

Firstly: Following a visit by Mr. Paul Dijoud and Gen Huchon, the decision was taken to maintain the DAMI and det. Noroît to allow M.E.P. democratic process. Secondly: Relief of DAMI still planned for end of September with a constant number of staff, contrary to the wish expressed previously by MMC. Third: As far as I am concerned, Chief MAM addressed Mmsg to MMC requesting that I remain in Rwanda until calm returns to the country (this is not going to happen any time soon).³⁵⁹

The intervention of the EMP in military cooperation issues in Rwanda appears to be almost systematic, and may concern, for example, loans and transfers of equipment, as noted by General Varret's deputy, head of the Military Assistance Mission, in a mission report to Rwanda in November 1993:

Requests for equipment. Only the 12.7 machine guns and their cartridges (transfer to Defense?), parkas and the loan of a GONIO station (under Noroît?) deserve to be taken into account. This last request would have received the approval of General Quesnot.³⁶⁰

The insistence of the Chief of Staff on equipping the combat forces with such equipment raises questions about their real mission in Rwanda and the direct links they could maintain with 14 rue de l'Élysée.

7.1.8.3 A DIRECT ÉLYSÉE-DAMI COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

Insofar as the situation in Rwanda was perceived by the President's personal military staff as a front line in a great strategy to which François Mitterrand was particularly attentive, as an experiment for the French political projects set out at La Baule, and finally as the site of an indirect military action in support of a friendly regime in Africa, a very precise monitoring of the situation was carried out both on the ground and at the highest level.

To this end, communication systems were set up between the units on the ground, i.e., the DAMI Panda, armed by the operators of the 1st RPIMa, and a chain of command that

appears polycephalous at first glance. The description of these links, or at least, initially, their establishment project, can be found in a number of summary documents dating from 1991 concerning the setting up of the DAMI Panda. The first document is an encrypted fax dated 26 July, 1991, sent from Ruhengeri by the “chief Panda” to the “chief BOI.”³⁶¹ This is a message sent by Lieutenant-Colonel Chollet to the head of the 1st RPIMa’s training operations office in Bayonne. The BOI of a regiment ensures the preparation and training of its men, but also the planning and follow-up of operations that the regiment might have to conduct on its own. Here, the situation is unusual because the DAMI Panda, while made up of soldiers from Bayonne, is employed by the military assistance mission in Kigali, and therefore by the defense attaché, and then, in Paris, by the Military Cooperation Mission, which itself has its own operations office. Two types of liaison are mentioned in this diagram. First, there are radio links, communications using encryption, in particular INMARSAT stations, and second, telephone links, which undoubtedly use encrypted telephones. The radio link project puts the DAMI Panda in communication with Noroît in Kigali. Through Noroît, with the defense attaché, with the DAMI in Chad and Madagascar and then with Reunion Island, but especially, first of all, with the 1st RPIMa in Bayonne, but also with Paris. For Paris, it was the EMA on the one hand, and on the other hand the “Coop,” i.e. the Military Cooperation Mission at the Ministry of Cooperation, and its head at the time, General Varret. In this scheme, the DAMI is positioned in connection with local arrangements, but above all it reveals the dual supervision that weighs on such a detachment, on the one hand the EMA, which covers all operations in which French soldiers are engaged, and on the other hand the Ministry of Cooperation, which directly employs these soldiers.

This summer proposal, which foreshadowed the move of the DAMI from the initial site of the University of Ruhengeri, favored by both the MMC and the EMA, to the Rwandan military camp of Mukamira³⁶² was significantly modified. Thus, an encrypted fax sent from Mukamira on 9 October, 1991, once again includes both communication schemes

under the same title “Possible links for DAMI Rwanda.”³⁶³ The two diagrams are identical except for one nuance that gives more importance to the Parisian authorities on whom DAMI seems to depend. Indeed, the telephone links to Paris indicate: “Élysée EMA.” Thus, between July and October, the link with the Cooperation disappears in favor of the Élysée, namely the EMP.

This scheme was designated as possible in October 1991, but we find confirmation of its reality in the military archives. Thus, the head of the detachment regularly wrote reports on his activities for Bayonne. All of these messages were collected within the framework of the unit directed by General Mourgeon in 1998.³⁶⁴ The content of these messages remains fairly neutral. The successive chiefs dealt above all with problems of personnel management, recalls, rotations and permissions. To a lesser extent, they may sometimes provide a small picture of the state of mind and the local political atmosphere. Thus, these messages could in one way or another have constituted a source of atmospheric intelligence, the extent to which it could have fed into a wider intelligence cycle or whether it was in fact a copy of an intelligence production outside the DAMI.³⁶⁵

These diagrams, analyzed and commented upon by the EMA in the context of the preparation of the work of the Quilès mission, were seen as the most obvious sign of a direct link between the EMP and the DAMI, translating, on the part of the former, a desire to use the latter. Military analysts in 1998 saw this control enterprise as a dress rehearsal for a project to transform the MMC into a specialized action laboratory in Africa, which the creation of the Special Operations Command had partially impeded.³⁶⁶

7.1.8.4 IS THE EMP GOVERNED OR DOES IT GOVERN ITSELF?

François Mitterrand and Hubert Védrine have a precise view of the EMP's memos, which they annotate and report, and can be found in the archives. The EMP thus regularly provided the President of the Republic and the Secretary General of the Presidency with analyses of the situation in Rwanda. Throughout the period, the EMP intervened to propose radical and powerful readings of the Rwandan situation.

At each moment of crisis, a memo arrives to radicalize the options, to divide the situations, which certainly forces the political power to choose, but also attenuates the possibility of thinking about the nuances and therefore the alternatives. There is thus a growing flow of writings from the EMP to the presidency, which, on the whole, paint the image of a march in a war situation that must be defended.

However, there is also an absence of top-down documents by which the president would communicate his decisions to the EMP. As soon as documents emanating from the EMP inform of decisions or go back to the president, it is legitimate to consider that orders were given by the president to the chief of staff orally, either by telephone or during meetings. The attention paid to the dossier by François Mitterrand and Hubert Védrine and the formalism of the memos make it impossible to imagine that the EMP acted without orders. The *a contrario* proof of these orders comes from the written memo of 9 February, 1993 “drafted by PJ [Pierre Joxe] to be given to the PR” according to the handwritten memo of the director of the cabinet of the Minister of Defense. This memo aims to “reflect on the procedures and precautions that should surround major operational decisions.” The document has been analyzed above. The procedures imagined by the Minister include in particular the imperative obligation of a written record of the proposals submitted to the President of the Republic, of the analyses of the objectives and the means envisaged, and finally - and this is the crucial point here - of the “decisions” themselves of the head of the armed forces:

*Your decisions in this area should be written and concern both the operation, its objectives and its means, and the commentary and media action to be undertaken - for we are increasingly living our affairs under the eye of the cameras and sometimes live, as in the last Iraqi affair. Thus worded, they should be disseminated without delay to those concerned.*³⁶⁷

Pierre Joxe adds in the section on “precautions” that it would be appropriate “not to use the telephone, which can present more disadvantages than advantages” and if this is the case, “that all international conversations of operational interest be recorded, deciphered and transcribed [with a view to] their partial or possibly total diffusion to the interested parties and in any case their archiving for later exploitation.” Finally, Pierre Joxe insists on the need to organize “in case of

a crisis,” under the aegis of the “secretary general with a written report,” the “pooling of information, whether it be instructions or intelligence.”

When we know that this memo was not given to François Mitterrand as Pierre Joxe wrote on the original: “H. Védrine. Memo not given to the PR, for fear of displeasing him...,”³⁶⁸ one can deduce that the proposals risked profoundly undermining the mechanism of operational decision-making as it was imposed on the presidency of the Republic at the time. The content of the memo could be seen as a protest against the system governing presidential decision-making in military matters, and even as a denunciation of this system, which Pierre Joxe had been able to observe for more than two years at the Hôtel de Brienne and with which he had come up against on several occasions, particularly in Rwanda. He proposes solutions to the failures that emerge in the memo to the President of the Republic: the absence of written records, particularly for the head of state’s own decisions, and the lack of documentary coordination by the Secretary General. It is possible that this double reality has characterized a type of functioning at the top of the State. In any case, we can observe the materialization of this reality in the Rwandan dossier.

These additional data make it possible to attest to the transmission of orders or directives verbally from the president of the Republic to his chief of personal military staff. The form and degree of precision of these presidential instructions are unknown to us. It is possible, however, to deduce from the strong technical autonomy of the EMP and its ideological dogmatism, the imprecise nature of these instructions, which it would be a matter for those concerned to translate as faithfully as possible. Retention in a position would depend on intelligence in translation and loyalty to a leader whose orders would be all the less debatable as they were given orally and transmitted guidelines rather than precise orders. The hypothesis of imprecision could explain this great autonomy of the EMP, which does not free itself from respect for civilian authority and even amplifies it, since the whole objective of the EMP is to serve the president, whatever the means. The practices thus observed in the functioning of this service, even though they seem to be

singular to say the least, do not attest to the independence of the EMP but rather to its absolute submission to a higher authority. The EMP governs itself to the same extent that it is governed. At any time, at least theoretically, the President of the Republic and the Secretary General of the Élysée could put an end to these practices.

If such a system persisted at the Élysée until the end of the seven-year term - and without the French failure in Rwanda apparently undermining it - the explanation would come from a convergence of interests between the two parties. On the one hand, the EMP saw an opportunity to acquire an importance and a strength far superior to its ordinary advisory function, except for the operational part relating to the implementation of nuclear weapons. Particularly in the case of Rwanda, the EMP can expand this operational capacity to the detriment of the EMA and in contradiction with the institutions. On the Rwandan issue itself and on the French presence in Africa in general, the EMP seems to be positioned as an instrument to respond to the challenge of the reduction of military resources allocated to the continent as demanded by the Ministry of Defense and to the challenge of political crises threatening regimes allied to France.

Finally, with a reinforced and interventionist EMP, the President of the Republic has a powerful tool for power and action, first against the Ministries of Defense and Cooperation, which often call for caution in the Rwandan dossier, then against the EMA, whose Atlanticist options, especially those of Admiral Lanxade, worry the Élysée, and finally during the period of cohabitation, during which the President must resist the encroachment of the Prime Minister on his reserved areas. The EMP thus projects itself on the ground, in Rwanda and elsewhere.

7.1.8.5 ON THE FRONT LINES OF THE ELYSEE

In December 1993, the President of the Republic, François Mitterrand, made known to the Prime Minister, Edouard Balladur, his observations on the essential points which, in his opinion, should be taken into account in the final drafting of the *White Paper* on Defense - a *White Paper* prepared by a Commission chaired by State Councillor Marceau Long. This in-depth reflection on the foundations of

France's defense policy was launched at the initiative of Édouard Balladur and with the agreement of the President of the Republic. The latter raises the points concerning nuclear deterrence, the industrial armament policy, the necessary distance from the Atlantic Alliance, conflict prevention and peacemaking in relation to France's high responsibilities in the Security Council. He also defended France's independence by emphasizing the importance of its national interests overseas, or in Africa, arguing for the respect of agreements concluded; this could justify the Élyséenne policy in Rwanda, especially as conceived by the military surrounding François Mitterrand.³⁶⁹

Rwanda showed that French military action could also take place outside the framework of the agreements reached. On the ground, pressure is high to bypass the regular chain of command and install a parallel chain for Rwanda. In Paris, its promoters were not so much afraid of the Armed Forces General Staff under the authority of the head of state as of the Ministry of Defense and its intransigent incumbent on law and procedure. On his arrival at rue Saint-Dominique, Pierre Joxe demanded interministerial meetings in order to put all French military assistance with the "field" countries in Africa on a level playing field, and to break with policies of great opacity, much to the displeasure of the Ministry of Cooperation and even more so of the Élysée.³⁷⁰

7.1.9 Resistance and defeat of the regular chain of command

The installation of a communications network directly linking the Élysée and Rwanda reflects the marginalization of the regular chain of command identified by its first representative, the defense attaché and head of the military cooperation mission, reporting respectively to the two ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs, and to the Mission of Military Assistance of the Ministry of Cooperation and Development. The first holder of this joint post, Gendarmerie Colonel René Galinié, began by obeying the directives of the EMP, even though there was no hierarchical link between them, and then he understood the dangers and ended up opposing Colonel Huchon

until he resigned himself to asking, probably, for his voluntary departure from Rwanda. His successor, also a gendarmerie officer, Colonel Cussac, also tried to resist but was forced to submit, as was his deputy, Lieutenant-Colonel Michel Robardey. Within the combat units deployed in Rwanda, both within the framework of *Noroît* and within the DAMI, a certain uneasiness was also expressed in the face of a murky policy systematically cloaked in confidentiality. The watchword of discretion is omnipresent and this discretion must cover indirect commitments at the limits of direct support. In some cases, this may even mean co-belligerence in planning or in action.

7.1.9.1 A DEFENSE ATTACHÉ'S SCALE OF VALUES

The regular reports of the defense attaché in Kigali, René Galinié (in office from June 1988 to July 1991), constitute a unique documentation that makes it possible to examine the evolution of the thinking of a senior French officer who had acquired solid experience of the military and political arcana of Rwandan power. The evolution of his view of its practices, from its drifts to its foreseeable consequences, is particularly perceptible in October 1990, during the first RPF offensive in Rwandan territory. Colonel Galinié seems to have then, by successive touches, taken the measure of the dangers that weigh on the future of the Tutsi of Rwanda and the country itself. On 8 October, he reported a crackdown organized in Kigali, the arrest of suspects "sometimes shot." He noted above all that "this hunt could, if it got worse, degenerate into killings."³⁷¹ On 10 October, his message of the day mentions his fear "that this conflict will end up degenerating into an ethnic war." He also reported that the MRND, "the only party," "seems to be taking control of the country outside the combat zone."³⁷² On 13 October, the same witness noted that "Hutu peasants organized by the MRND have intensified the search for suspected Tutsi in the hills; massacres have been reported in the Kibilira region, 20 kilometers northwest of Gitarama."³⁷³ In so doing, he took the measure of the impact of the conflict on Rwanda's internal political balance and already pointed to the role of the presidential party in organizing the anti-Tutsi repression.

Shortly afterwards, no doubt on the basis of his observations and contacts with his Rwandan relations, Colonel Galinié noted that any “territorial abandonment in this region would trigger serious abuses against the Tutsi populations,” which would be “either spontaneous or directly encouraged by the hard-liners in the current regime, thus playing their own game.”³⁷⁴ A few days later, the defense attaché clarified his thoughts and hypothesized that President “Habyarimana, constrained by his ‘hawks’ and the virtual certainty that any territorial abandonment would trigger the massacre of Tutsis in the interior throughout the territory, was opposed to what he considered an intolerable occupation.” The officer noted above all that this mass violence, if it spread, could put Paris in a dilemma: “That of the request for protection on the part of the Tutsi and Hutu who were in their favor, which could be presented to France.”³⁷⁵ This was probably the first warning given to Paris about the consequences of its support for a regime in the event of widespread massacres. Anticipating the events that would punctuate the history of Rwanda in the 1990s, he invited the French authorities to carefully assess the risks they were running by supporting President Habyarimana. A message sent two days later went even further and insisted on the risk of “physical elimination within the country of the Tutsis, 500,000 to 700,000 people, by the Hutu, 7 million individuals.”³⁷⁶ In other words, in October 1990, the defense attaché was already fully aware of the considerable weight of the radicals within the Rwandan system and their determination to retain power at any cost. In doing so, he questioned Paris by submitting elements likely to make it re-evaluate its policy of support for Rwanda, which was then supported by the Élysée.

Colonel Galinié’s end-of-mission report dated 19 June, 1991,³⁷⁷ provides a detailed analysis of the dominant power in Rwanda. First of all, he notes that a good number of ministers, designated to justify a form of openness of the regime, are in fact “controlled in their actions and decisions by the restricted group of leaders, among whom are a few high-ranking military officers who form the inner circle around the president.”³⁷⁸ He draws up a list of the main members of this “inner circle” who are known to all and

“hated” by the population because they “paralyze the action of the head of state and undermine any desire for in-depth transformation.” He singles out the president’s wife, Colonel Bagatwa, “the real henchman of the presidency,” the Minister of Industry, Tsirobera, and Colonels Serubuga, Rwagafilita and Nsekaliye, who decide on practically all the important appointments in the administration, the army and the judiciary.³⁷⁹

This final report, which concludes four years of Colonel Galinié’s presence in Rwanda, highlights the impossibility for President Habyarimana to extricate himself from the pressure of the “inner circle,” the Northern Clan, which systematically torpedoed attempts at dialogue or a political settlement before finally committing to a genocidal program. It is true that diplomats and other defense attachés mentioned the massacres that occurred in Rwanda in their correspondence with Paris, often putting them into perspective, and gave some indication of the activities of the “inner circle.”³⁸⁰ But none of them apparently wanted or dared to draw up a balance sheet of the situation that was as clear-cut as the one provided by René Galinié. In the last part of his mandate in Kigali, the defense attaché provided the main keys to understanding Rwandan society and, unfortunately, accurately anticipated the genocide whose program was maturing in the radical circles surrounding the Rwandan head of state. Colonel Galinié also tried to personally warn President Habyarimana, during the numerous tête-à-tête meetings that brought him together with the Rwandan head of state, against any elimination of opponents, Tutsi and prisoners. A message sent by fax to Colonel Fruchard of the EMA recalls Colonel Galinié’s insistence to the Rwandan armed forces “that they finally take prisoners, especially Ugandans, and that they stop ‘dying of their wounds’.”³⁸¹ With all his interlocutors from the presidency, the FAR and the gendarmerie, the defense attaché repeated, as he had told Colonel Fruchard in the same message of 6 June, 1991, that it was “impossible to get the message across that Uganda was directly involved in the conflict, as they and the president had again insisted, without being able to present a dossier supported by irrefutable material evidence.

I indicated to them that this procedure was indispensable and regretted that so far

my steps in this direction had not been followed by results. It seemed necessary to me, in order to have some chances of success, to remind them in an abrupt way that, for the moment, they presented only assertions legally unverifiable. My words were intended to make it clear to them that it is up to them to demonstrate the implication and not to us. I did, however, make it clear that I was more than willing to assist them in this search.

I think I was heard. Now it's time to wait, watch and keep the pressure on. Upon reflection, I think that this step was indeed indispensable. It will have had at least the merit of 'making the partners responsible', which should lead them to understand the necessity of investigating the dossier themselves with determination in order to become credible (and incidentally to show more objectivity and measure in their declarations).

Strangely enough, this determination on the part of Colonel Galinié to put pressure on the Rwandan authorities in order to force them to stop their policy of violence and lies does not separate him from their leader. The defense attaché is even very much appreciated by the Rwandan president despite his advanced understanding of the "inner circle" and the danger he sees in it. President Habyarimana repeatedly requested, as Ambassador Martres' TDs clearly indicated, that Colonel Galinié continue his mission. It is possible, and this is a hypothesis, that Habyarimana was looking for allies to counter the hold that the extremists had on him. With Colonel Galinié gone, the Rwandan president found himself even more trapped by the "hardliners" of the regime.

Is it necessary to say that the decision-makers were informed of the situation in Rwanda and of the heavy threats accumulating on the Tutsi, from the days following the attack of the RPF in October 1990 and the massive repression by the authorities of the internal "enemies" of the regime, Tutsi and Hutu supporting them? Colonel Galinié warned, his successor will also do so, against the advice of the parallel channels of disinformation and intimidation. The messages in faxes, the defense attachés or ambassadors radiate widely, from the Élysée to Foreign Affairs and the EMA. The Minister of Defense Pierre Joxe read them assiduously. But we note that the steps taken and the alerts issued by the defense attaché are ignored in Paris. One may wonder if, in the end, French decision-makers really wanted to hear an analysis that came, at least in part, to contradict the policy implemented in Rwanda, betting, among other things, on a national reconciliation that was, to say the least, hypothetical, dominated by the ascendancy of Hutu extremists, and likely, for this reason,

to tip over into the extermination of the Tutsi “enemies.” Colonel Galinié has constantly warned of the threat of such a policy favoring the Hutu extremists, rushing President Habyarimana into their arms rather than extracting him from them, granting him the military means he demands rather than conditioning them on real democratization measures such as the end of ethnic mentions on Rwandan identity cards. At his level and with the support of his direct superior, General Varret, he pleaded for a French commitment that did not grant everything immediately to the Rwandan government so that France, which he represented with the ambassador, would retain its means of action in Rwanda.

Thus, Colonel Galinié asked that the mission of the DAMI, installed in Ruhengeri after the RPF offensive of 23 and 24 January 1991, be “fixed at 4 months” and that he refused “the setting up of the more offensive DAO,” adding: “the MMC supports me.”³⁸² At his level too, as commander of Operation *Noroît*, he endeavoured to impose on the Rwandan Armed Forces “rules of behavior,”³⁸³ a concern for “indispensable moderation.”³⁸⁴ This policy of moderation in assistance to the FAR and control of the political partner came up against the intransigence of the EMP in Paris, leading Colonel Galinié to conclude that he had to resign in view of his growing isolation. His relations with Colonel Huchon, which were excellent at the beginning - the two officers were from the same class at Saint-Cyr - gradually deteriorated until they became very difficult, the reason being that the responses of the defense attaché to the Deputy Chief of Defense Staff contradicted his expectations. From being a man of trust, Colonel Galinié ended up becoming a threatening element in the parallel policy conducted by the EMP in Rwanda. The archives are silent on the reasons for his departure from Rwanda, which was not desired by the Rwandan president. Galinié’s last message, the TA Kigali of 19 June 1991, shows no concession to the *Élysée* line on the subject. Colonel Galinié’s retreat allowed him to retain full control of his intellectual freedom and his ethics as an officer in the face of thought injunctions and solicitations for questionable actions.

7.1.9.2 COLONEL GALINIÉ’S RETREAT, A KEY STEP IN TAKING CONTROL OF THE FIELD

As soon as he arrived in Rwanda, and especially with the French military engagement

of October 1990, Colonel Galinié received pressing requests from Colonel Huchon, a trace of which has been preserved in the archives of the SHD in Vincennes, that of the handwritten faxes sent from the Élysée, destined to be destroyed after being read, according to the noted instructions. We have observed the triple problematic nature of these messages, which must materially disappear, which deviate from the normal path since, in theory, a deputy to the President of the Republic's chief of staff has no legitimacy or authority to directly address a defense attaché at his post, and moreover to impose on him a reading of the events he is witnessing.

The sign of Colonel Galinié's beginning disgrace was the assignment to him of an assistant, Colonel Canovas, who was in direct contact with the FAR military staff, since his main and unofficial mission was to advise the Deputy Chief of Staff. Authorized by the Armed Forces Staff in Paris, Colonel Canovas' mission seems to be closely controlled by the President's personal staff, which has the political and material means for this irregular control. Colonel Galinié's successor will not be able to counter this parallel line of command any more than Colonel Galinié, nor will General Varret, despite their determination to oppose it.

When he arrived in Kigali at the end of July 1991, Colonel Cussac, also a gendarmerie officer, fought in the same way, with the support of the head of military cooperation, to impose respect for procedure, to prevent encroachments from the unofficial channel and to warn of the radicalization of FAR. All to no avail. Unlike Colonel Galinié, however, he agreed to remain in Rwanda and to comply with a policy whose great dangers he perceived.

7.1.9.3 COLONEL CUSSAC, FROM A TENTATIVE RESISTANCE TO A FORCED PARTICIPATION

On 27 April 1992, Colonel Cussac sent a report to Admiral Lanxade, Chief of the Defense Staff in Paris, concerning French involvement in the command structures of the Rwandan army, in particular the assignment of Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin to the Rwandan chief of military staff. This decision, which escaped the authority of the Ministry of Cooperation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was intended to strengthen

France's direct support for President Habyarimana. The arrival of the opposition in power raised serious questions about this unilateral and dangerous commitment, because it was too much in favor of the extremists, as his predecessor had pointed out a year earlier. The defense attaché reported to Paris on the feelings of the newly appointed prime minister, "on 18 April, 1992, when he said to one of our nationals, knowing full well that this would be immediately reported to us: 'We are becoming a French department! The context is no longer the same; before there was only the president, now there is a government. Our friends (meaning the French) are going to work in a different context.' It is thus clearly indicated to us that the new government does not intend to do mere posturing and that Rwanda's policy will no longer be made solely by the presidency."³⁸⁵

Colonel Cussac felt that it was necessary to take advantage of the formation of this new government, independent of the presidential power, to modify France's policy in Rwanda and to make it return, in terms of decision-making processes, to practices more in line with the rule of institutions:

These reactions, nuanced on the appointment of an adviser to the MEC because of the lack of consultation that presided over his appointment (neither the Rwandan government nor the French ambassador in office were consulted), are wait-and-see and self-interested as to the implementation of materials that for them, could only be decisive ...and free. In this context, it would be desirable that Lieutenant-Colonel Maurin's action be effective, both in terms of his advice and in terms of the proposal of new materials, only when the transitional government, as a whole, has taken a position on its attitude towards the RPF in the context of the upcoming negotiations. He would take advantage of this time to understand the military situation and to immerse himself in the local context.³⁸⁶

Colonel Cussac followed the analyses of the opposition, which had its own concerns. On 27 May 1993, he sent the DRM "a copy of a memo addressed by the MDR,³⁸⁷ PSD and PL parties to the President of the Republic,"³⁸⁸ emphasizing the content of one paragraph. In order to counter the murderous drift of President Habyarimana's regime, which is now allied with extremist militias, "energetic measures" should be taken to stop the use of the armed forces in

assassinations and violence, write the opposition parties, who mention France's support for a bloody dictatorship:

1°. The reform of the Rwandan army and gendarmerie staffs as well as the command of the military units and the gendarmerie. 2°. The dismantling of the Presidential Guard, which is known for its participation in acts of violence and vandalism throughout the country and particularly in the capital. 3°. The departure of the French military if they are in the country to watch over the security of expatriates and the president alone and not the security of the Rwandan population.³⁸⁹

In this document, the defense attaché identifies the risk of military support aligned with a presidential power that is in the process of being radicalized, and he notes that this risk is understood by the Rwandan opposition. He then tried to put cooperation at the service of a government that was more representative of society by distancing it from being used for extremist purposes.

The head of the MMC, General Varret, defended this reorientation of military policy in Rwanda, which he saw as having two advantages: it distanced him from the presidential power, which was infiltrated by extremists, and it re-established regular procedures within the military cooperation, instead of the parallel lines developed by the EMP without anyone else reacting to this deviation from the hierarchical chain of command. These parallel lines prevailed over the defense of the regular lines held until then by Colonel Cussac.

On 2 March, 1993, when the authority over the military personnel deployed in Rwanda was passed to Colonel Delort, the defense attaché faxed to the Élysée, to General Huchon (as well as to the DPM and the Ministry of Defense) a communiqué from the MDR party supporting the presence of the cooperants, the expatriates and the French troops, and a letter from the "group of Rwandan intellectuals in Butare" addressed to "his Excellency the President of the French Republic" warning of the risk of "Somalization" of Rwanda through the disintegration of State structures following a possible takeover of power by the RPF through arms "in the event of the departure of French troops from the country."³⁹⁰ With this direct communication to the Élysée, without it apparently being transferred to the MMC, Colonel Cussac is showing his submission to the parallel line.

7.1.9.4 THE LUCIDITY OF A CORPS COMMANDER

Although the commanders of the combat units deployed in Rwanda from October 1990 onwards gradually escaped the authority of the defense attaché and were subordinated to another chain of command, some of them were still officers committed to analysis and its transmission. Colonel Thomann, who commanded the Noroît detachment sent in as a matter of urgency after the RPF offensive of 1 October, 1990, noted, in a 9 November report to the EMA, the “tactical blunders of the Rwandan army, whose main quality is clearly not the art of maneuver.”³⁹¹ Only a man on the ground can observe a social and political normalcy that is gradually giving way to the genocidal process. The radicalization of the population, increased by the effect of the RPF offensive, is likely to tip the government in place into a relentless struggle against the “enemy” - a term that the French soldier is careful to put in quotation marks. The options for fighting the external enemy can very quickly lead to the hunt for the internal enemy as soon as a social “grid” exists and a political will emerges.

Given the grid of the country resulting from the organization of the population into hills, and the density of the population in all areas other than the northeast (Akagera reserve, which is virtually uninhabited) - a population that is in fact mostly hostile to the rebels - the latter seem to have a very narrow field of action. On the other hand, there is still a risk of inter-ethnic conflagration, insofar as the population is strongly encouraged to be “vigilant” in order to counter the rebellion and detect suspects. This vigilance is reflected in fairly aggressive reflexes in the villages (roadblocks, local check-points) which can degenerate into settling of scores under the guise of security, the main victims being of course the minority Tutsi or the Hutu who are allegedly affiliated with them. It would probably not take much to set off the fire.³⁹²

The trigger could then be the dispelling of the ambiguity by the Habyarimana regime and the president himself.

On the whole, the Rwandan president has had a very positive attitude, but he fears that a policy of openness towards the rebellion will not be well received by a population that is highly “motivated” and not very keen on compromise with the “enemy.” A certain ambiguity therefore remains, because it will be necessary to reconcile the official desire for openness with the desire to maintain the support of a “vigilant” population. The president’s room for maneuver therefore seems relatively narrow.³⁹³

It seems that General Guignon, the recipient of this “Thomfax,” did not perceive the importance of the information and did not pass it on to those who were entitled to it, in particular to the EMP, which was responsible for the presidential decision to intervene in Rwanda. On the other hand, Colonel Thomann’s report was transferred to the Army chief of staff, which seems to be a dead end.³⁹⁴ The military redactor of the analysis insists on the “perspective” of the coming disengagement, which is “a sensitive issue that is more a matter of politics than of military efficiency.” He advocates a two-stage movement, a limited first stage to reassure the Rwandan president, who is calling for *Noroît* to be maintained, and “the definitive withdrawal within a month or so to take into account the problems caused by an excessive duration of our presence.”³⁹⁵ Col. Thomann’s analysis, based on a critical observation of the field, testifying to a heightened vision, concludes that it is necessary to disengage against the wishes of President Habyarimana. He is probably unaware that he is also opposing the policy of military maintenance and political support for the regime decided at the presidential level.

The creation of the DAMI and the steps taken to reinforce *Noroît* - particularly through the deployment of substantial artillery resources - described in the first chapters of the Report raise various questions on the part of the actors in charge, and even a certain unease about the role required of the French forces. These critical positions, such as that of Colonel Rosier, are in the minority, but they nonetheless underline the risks of strictly military solutions without a clear, coherent and lasting political perspective. Since the ambiguity between aligning with the hardliners of the regime, supporting the opposition path and accepting direct negotiations with the RPF was never resolved, it is logical that the all-military approach continued to prevail until the Arusha Accords of August 1993. This logic reinforces the hold of the EMP on French action in Rwanda. The formation of the cohabitation government in France profoundly modified this pattern since strong political options were defended, on the one hand with the signing of agreements on the disengagement of France and the internationalization of taking charge of Rwanda during the transitional phase, and on the other hand, in the face of the recognized genocide, the decision to provide massive aid to the populations

in order to save them from the “massacres.” The physiognomy of the field is thus radically transformed.

7.1.9.5 THE POSITION OF CIVILIAN CO-OPERANTS.

The head of the civilian cooperation mission, Michel Cuignet,³⁹⁶ appears in the archives as personally opposed to his country’s policy in Rwanda. The magistrate Odette-Luce Bouvier, seconded to the liberal Minister of Justice, strongly supported the establishment of the rule of law in Rwanda. She was unable to return to her post after the summer holiday of 1993, as the officials of the presidential regime had obtained her dismissal - as well as the dismissal of the democratic minister whom she had assisted.³⁹⁷ There is no record of any protest by the French government, which complied.

7.1.10 Arms deliveries to Rwanda: decision-making processes at work

“We have no interest in the Tutsi advancing too quickly => arms and ammunition deliveries.”³⁹⁸ The fonds of the President’s Africa advisor, Bruno Delaye, preserve the trace of this sentence pronounced by François Mitterrand and which he transcribed. It is not dated, but the mention of the participants (the Minister of Defense, Pierre Joxe, Admiral Lanxade and the Minister of Cooperation, Marcel Debarge) and the four Noroît companies in the same document leads one to believe that these remarks were made during the core cabinet meeting of 24 February, 1993, at a time when the question of the degree of France’s commitment in the face of the RPF offensive was being raised.³⁹⁹ Although the President of the Republic immediately afterwards specified that “the mission of our soldiers is not to wage war,”⁴⁰⁰ this statement illustrates an aspect of French policy in Rwanda between 1990 and 1994: in order to prevent the RPF from finding itself in a position of strength, the FAR must be supplied with massive amounts of arms so that they can hold the front line.

7.1.10.1 A COMPLEX DOSSIER WITH MANY QUESTIONS

France’s policy on arms deliveries to Rwanda raises many questions and accusations. What weapons did France deliver to Rwanda between 1990 and 1993? Did France

contribute to arming the genocidaires? Did it overstep the embargo decided by the UN in May 1994? The subject has been discussed in previous chapters. Our objective here is not to claim to be exhaustive and it is difficult, in the absence of significant archives, to provide precise answers to all the questions. It is, however, possible to place this trade and flow in the context of the study of decision-making processes and their application, based on the archival series that the Commission has been able to gather over the past two years.

Arms deliveries to Rwanda must be understood in the more general context of French policy in this area at the international level. Delivering arms is a political and diplomatic act. Although it is not within the scope of the Commission's work to present a detailed comparison of France's practices in this area with other countries in the world at the same time, it must be emphasized that France sold and transferred arms of various kinds to different countries in the world before, during, and after the period of interest to us here. Rwanda has no exclusivity in this respect; France did not start delivering arms abroad in 1990 and did not stop doing so in 1994. However, France participated in the over-arming not only of Rwanda but also of the Great Lakes region in the period that concerns us, as shown by the request of the President of the Republic.⁴⁰¹

Finally, a distinction must be made between official French policy, decided by the State and governed by precise procedures that must be presented, and illegal and illicit trafficking, involving private actors and companies acting formally only in their own name in the service of a foreign State. In this case, the minute traces that appear in the archives consulted provide only a fragmentary knowledge.

The synthetic study of arms deliveries represents a scientific and methodological challenge, in the sense that it requires extensive and in-depth research in all the archive centers that the members of the Commission have been working on for the past two years. It implies a detailed observation of the role played by the various institutions of the Fifth Republic in this area: the Élysée, Matignon and also various ministries (Foreign Affairs, Defense and Cooperation in particular,

but also the Ministry of the Budget and the Ministry of the Economy and Finance). The sources that make them visible, even partially, are produced at different periods. They may be produced at the time of the event by different actors within these different institutions: diplomatic telegrams, messages from the relevant departments of the different ministries, annual reports and assessments, minutes of interministerial meetings ruling on requests for approval made by industrialists, or even documentation kept in files with surprising titles. For example, in the fonds of Marcel Debarge's Cabinet, this sub-file entitled "petit matériel de bureau" (small office equipment) contains documents concerning not pencil sharpeners, erasers or pens, but information on the transport of arms to Rwanda (machine guns, shells, grenades, and various ammunition).⁴⁰² The sources can also be produced *a posteriori*, notably in 1998 in the context of the preparatory work for the MIP by the Mourgeon unit and at the time when a new cohabitation government was concerned about the practices of their predecessors in this area in the face of accusations made in the press. In the context of this work, we have endeavored to synthesize these different and complementary sources. Nevertheless, we would like to point out that they have one thing in common, namely the bias that they generate. They only allow us to trace what required the production of a written document that was preserved, since oral practices are completely beyond our reach. There is sometimes mention of telephone calls, but their content has not been recorded. Similarly, it is difficult to affirm that the documentation preserved is complete and gives a faithful account of the subject.

Arms deliveries sold or transferred by France or companies established in France are governed by precise regulations which should be presented and whose respect must be questioned in the practical decision-making process. We must first mention the way in which these deliveries are regulated in order to identify the actors involved, then observe the nature of the arms delivered and finally question the existence or otherwise of arms deliveries after the outbreak of the Tutsi genocide and the embargo decided by the UN.

Arms deliveries can be of two kinds: transfers (non-remunerated or remunerated) from the French army's stocks, or sales through industrialists. All of these practices are regulated at the national level, but their implementation sometimes differs from the planned framework: the Élysée decided to take control quite early on.

Regulated practices in 1990

In 1990, there were no international regulations on the conventional arms trade. Since 1945, the priority had been the control of weapons of mass destruction, of which there is no trace in the trade between France and Rwanda between 1990 and 1994. The United Nations, on the other hand, can intervene by putting in place an embargo on arms sales for certain countries. The only initiative, in the period that interests us, is a concern for transparency through the creation of a register that includes information on arms transfers in 1991. With regard to arms deliveries to Rwanda during this period, it is therefore French procedures that are the reference framework. Little known, deliberately opaque and not subject to parliamentary control, it is appropriate to present briefly how procedures functioned in 1990.

Arms deliveries are first of all part of the framework of non-remunerated or remunerated transfers granted by the State and implemented by the services of the various ministries. The aim is to draw on the stocks available in the armed forces' reserves for equipment that is to be exported. Interestingly, on a memo detailing the procedure for non-remunerated transfers, a few words are crossed out: "non-remunerated transfer is always a personal decision of the minister and of him alone."⁴⁰³ In any case, according to the procedure, it is indeed the Minister of Defense who issues the authorization for transfer, as is proved by the letters signed by him or his chief of staff in the files. During the period that interests us here, the four Ministers of Defense were Jean-Pierre Chevènement (May 12, 1988-January 29, 1991), Pierre Joxe (January 29, 1991-March 9, 1993), Pierre Bérégovoy (March 9, 1993-March 29, 1993, in conjunction with his function as Prime Minister) and François Léotard (March 29, 1993-May 11, 1995). The remunerated transfer is decided by the Commission des

cessions (Transfer Commission) chaired by the International Relations Department. It is requested by a sales operator who acts as an intermediary between the potential buyer and the transferring administration (the Directorate General of Armaments or DGA and the military staff). For African countries, this operator is most often the Mission militaire de coopération (MMC). The non-remunerated transfer is requested, depending on the case, by the countries themselves through the local defense attaché, by the political authorities as a diplomatic gift following visits, by the DGA or the staffs, as leverage for exports as a start to a major contract. It should be noted that the question does not arise - or very rarely does it arise - of whether a transfer should be non-remunerated or remunerated, as the origin of the request is highly differentiated and motivated from the outset.⁴⁰⁴

Industrialists specializing in the production and sale of arms also sell arms to Rwanda, provided they have obtained sales-level approval from the Commission Interministérielle pour l'étude des Exportations de Matériels de Guerre [Inter-ministerial Commission for the Study of War Material Exports] (CIEEMG). It issues approvals to manufacturers wishing to supply arms and equipment to a foreign country. It was created by decree 49-770 of 10 June 1949. Its organization, in 1990, is defined by decree 55-965 of 16 July, 1995 [*sic* 1955]. It is thus an interministerial commission that meets monthly - generally on the third Thursday of the month - with representatives of the ministries concerned (Foreign Affairs, Defense, Economy and Finance, in particular) authorized for defense secrecy and under the chairmanship of the Secretary General of National Defense (SGDN) in the period of interest to us.⁴⁰⁵ The SGDN is a service attached to the Prime Minister, whose task it is to assist in all decisions related to national defense and homeland security. From 9 June, 1988 to 18 June, 1993, it was Guy Fougier, a State Counselor. He was replaced by General Achille Lerche, also a State Counselor, who remained in office until 6 July 1995.

The CIEEMG's mission is to study and possibly provide an industrialist who requests it with an authorization for prospecting (in certain cases associated with a temporary export), negotiation or sale of war materiel. Authorization at the sale level opens the way to the signature of a commercial contract allowing the delivery of war materiel or associated services. Prior CIEEMG approval

does not constitute authorization to export a material, and the export may concern all or only part of the materials mentioned. Once the commercial contract has been signed, the manufacturer must obtain a War Materiel Export Authorization (AEMG) issued by Customs after approval by specific departments within the Ministry of Defense (Direction Générale de l'Armement, or DGA, and the DRI) and the Economic Department within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Data concerning the exit from the national territory of equipment having received an AEMG are collected by the Customs (DGDDI - Direction Générale des Douanes et des Droits Indirects, General Directorate of Customs and Excise). Here, we focus only on approvals at the "sale" level. The CIEEGM minutes are only indicative of the intentions of the industrialist and, in case of acceptance, of what this commission finds acceptable to grant. The AEMGs, on the other hand, show only the sales actually made, while customs confirm, or not, the crossing of the border.

7.1.10.3 THE ÉLYSÉE AT WORK

In theory, therefore, transfers are the responsibility of the Ministry of Defense, whose principal official signs a memo describing the purpose of the transfer and indicating the export authorization. The procedure is not always followed exactly, and it is notable that it is the Élysée which, in fact, takes charge of the arms transfer policy, while the Ministry of Defense carries out its orders, even when it seems reluctant to apply them. Activity was particularly intense during the period of serious crises in Rwanda, when the capital, the seat of Habyarimana's power, was supposed to be directly threatened by an RPF offensive. The President of the Republic intervened to speed up deliveries. Similarly, French soldiers were particularly concerned about the state of stocks available to the Rwandan army. Several evaluation missions noted the insufficiency of these stocks, and France undertook to fill the gaps on a regular basis.

As early as 1990, the Élysée responded to the urgent requests of President Habyarimana and the defense attaché in Kigali.⁴⁰⁶ In fact, the Minister of Defense does not seem to have much of a say in arms transfers over the entire period. As early as October 1990,

the Élysée gave the orders, the ministries carried them out and financed the transport. Thus, a letter from Thomson Brandt, dated 24 October 1990, clearly describes the decision-making process behind the first arms deliveries. The central role of the Élysée in the decision is clearly apparent, as is the fact that it is possible to call upon industrialists to settle a transfer decided upon by the State and which the Army cannot honor. Moreover, the administrative regularization and the payment can only be made later:

Colonel.

On Monday, 8 October [1990] we were informed by the DGA/DRI, Mr. Chabriol and the MMC (Mission militaire de Coopération), that a message from the Élysée had been sent to them, for information, stipulating that 100 68-meter rockets for helicopters were to be made available to the Armed Forces Staff for immediate shipment, by French military air transport to Rwanda.

This information was confirmed to us by the Office of the Minister of Defense (Colonel Fruchard).

This type of rocket is not in service in the French Army. Our company delivered 100 rockets to the Orleans Bricy base on 12 October.

We would like to ask you to implement an order procedure with MMC so that it can make payment for the 100 rockets shipped.⁴⁰⁷

In June 1992, an evaluation mission to Rwanda was organized by the Army Staff to take stock of Rwandan needs shortly after the RPF offensive.⁴⁰⁸ The conclusion was clear: a strong intervention by France was needed, as noted at an interministerial “crisis” meeting on 18 June, 1992. The Ministry of Cooperation was called upon to play an important role, but it did not have the necessary credits because they were blocked by the Ministry of the Budget. The director of the cabinet of the Minister of Cooperation, Dominique de Combles de Nayves, therefore asked Matignon to grant the President of the Republic’s wish. This memo shows how the will of the President of the Republic imposes itself in spite of obstacles, even budgetary ones. It also shows how the various institutions tried to overcome the obstacles, whatever the cost, and to satisfy the demands of François Mitterrand.

Following a recent mission to assess the military situation in Rwanda, led by the Armed Forces General Staff, the interministerial crisis meeting held on 18 June at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs agreed to submit to the President of the Republic a proposal aimed at significantly increasing the human and material support that France was providing to the Rwandan government in the armed conflict opposing the Rwandan Patriotic Front.

As the Head of State has responded positively to this proposal, the Ministry of Cooperation and Development is called upon to implement a significant part of this program.

Although its current resources will enable it to send 25 additional personnel in 1992, it will not be able to meet the foreseeable needs for equipment from its available funds until the Ministry of the Budget waives the freeze on carry-over credits from the 1991 fiscal year, as notified by the Minister of the Budget's circular dated 12 May, 1992.

In view of the extreme urgency of implementing the decisions of the President of the Republic, I would be grateful if you could intervene as soon as possible with the services of the Ministry of the Budget in order to authorize the Ministry of Cooperation and Development to benefit from the totality of the carry-over appropriations for the 1991 financial year expected in chapter 41-42, article 10, i.e. 47,436,734 F.⁴⁰⁹

The will of the Élysée overcame the reluctance to commit France to Rwanda, particularly on the subject of transfers in 1992, when it became important to preserve the strength of the Rwandan army so as not to weaken the position of the delegation in Arusha.⁴¹⁰ It imposed itself on the most reluctant, including Pierre Joxe, who had to give in. The latter nevertheless used interesting formulations, particularly during the summer of 1992 when 105 mm cannons and their ammunition were transferred to the Rwandan armed forces. Let us cite one example: Ministerial Decision No. 2403 of 17 July 1992:

In the file cited in reference, the EMA reported on the difficult situation Rwanda was experiencing on the Ugandan border and considered it essential to proceed urgently with a new replenishment of artillery ammunition placed with the FAR.

This request is in line with the policy decided by the President of the Republic, of indirect support to the FAR. Consequently, I authorize the free transfer to the FAR of 1,000 complete 105 mm HM2 explosive rounds at a unit price of 650 francs. The total value of this free transfer is 650,000 francs.⁴¹¹

Other ministerial decisions followed during the month.⁴¹²

The Minister of Defense was in his role when he granted authorization, but he justified it by the fact that it corresponded first and foremost to the wishes and policies defined by the President of the Republic. In August 1992, François Nicoulaud was more simplistic, contenting himself with enumerating the nature of the transfer and formalizing its authorization. This transfer, in this case, was the consequence of President Habyarimana's visit to Paris on 16 and 17 July, 1992 and the meeting he had with François Mitterrand in the middle of July. This meeting was prepared in advance by a preparatory memo presenting the various themes of the meeting, and in particular that of military aid and arms deliveries:

The President of the Republic could indicate that he is following the evolution of the situation in Rwanda with particular attention and that he is anxious not to let this country be destabilized. He could emphasize that the dispatch of a second company to protect expatriates, the delivery of materials and equipment and the strengthening of our cooperation with the army and the gendarmerie were signs of this desire and of France's wish to strengthen its support to Rwanda without directly committing its military resources.⁴¹³

The meeting took place in the presence of General Quesnot, whose handwritten memos taken on this occasion are preserved in the Debarge files. In the context of this visit by the Rwandan president to France, the latter expressed requests in terms of arms deliveries. General Quesnot took notes and photocopied them for the MinCoop. The following are mentioned:

- a) 2 batteries 105 mm (12 pieces).
30 mortars 12.7 mm
10 mortars 120 mm rifled
20 mortars 80 mm
- b) Ammunition (2,000 each set)
Helicopter rockets 2,000
20 mm cannon shells (helicopters) 10 000
- c) Retaliation against 122 mm NRA gun (possibly with passage of combat aircraft)
- d) Night vision devices for 5x Bu

Two other sheets of notes are preserved on which the name of General Quesnot and the date of 17 July, 1992 are mentioned. These are notes

taken on the spot by the head of François Mitterrand's EMP during the discussion between the latter and Habyarimana. He describes him as "cordial" and reports his analysis of the "tense" situation in his country. Then he reported his requests, his "shopping list" as noted in the document, which was granted to him by the President of the Republic. The President explained that these weapons served to preserve the balance of power at the time of the Arusha negotiations:

*Shopping list: 105, rockets... Answer: 105 ammunition + 2 other guns and possibly battery in the long term. Gunner training 122. [...]
FM: we help to seal and hold position during negotiations in the present form. We are not at war.⁴¹⁴*

Delivering weapons is a political matter. It is also, and above all, an Elysian policy. It additionally involves other actors in contact with the Rwandan Armed Forces.

7.1.10.4 THE ROLE OF MILITARY ACTORS

Some military personnel may also anticipate the Elysian will, and alert their superiors to the needs presented by them or by their interlocutors in Rwanda as imperative to reinforce the defense of the FAR. Requests may be transmitted through the diplomatic post in Kigali by the ambassador and the defense attaché, most often transcribing requests that have been made to them, or by military officials deployed in the field who write memos and reports. Thus, in the spring of 1992, Colonel Delort, on his return from his analysis mission, explicitly mentioned in his report of June 17, 1992, the requests made by Colonel Nsabimana, Chief of Staff of the FAR, which he passed on to his superiors:

The requests. On behalf of Colonel Nsabimana CEM/FAR

- *Training of the 270 second lieutenants leaving the ESM in an operational conditioning course before they are sent to the front.*
- *The provision of liaison means - old file;*
- *Ammunition stocks - to avoid the serious problem of interruptions, especially for 120 mm;*
- *The supply of about twenty night vision equipment to assign one per unit of the four "shock" battalions. The rapid arrival of 3 RASURA in working order;*
- *The participation of NOROÏT in a dissuasive action to reassure the populations in the rear.⁴¹⁵*

Colonel Delort was not content to simply pass on the wishes of his interlocutors. He took a stand and proposed

*To form a 105 mm battery able to constitute the army's fire reserve within four weeks. To do this, he would have to hand over 5 or 6 105 mm guns and the battery units currently in place in the CAR. Given the specialists already present, only one additional officer is needed.*⁴¹⁶

The 105 mm batteries were actually delivered to Rwanda in the summer of 1992.⁴¹⁷

In February 1993, shortly after the RPF offensive that directly threatened Kigali,⁴¹⁸ a new evaluation carried out within the Rwandan stockpile went to the director of the civilian and military cabinet of the Ministry of Defense. Beyond the obvious disdain for the MMC, the author of the memo points to the fragility of the Rwandan reserves, thus alerting to the likely difficulties that the FAR might face in protecting the Rwandan capital:

By fax, our assessment mission to Rwanda reports on the critical situation of the FAR in the area of ammunition.

1. The Defense has provided for certain needs - 100,000 rounds of 12.7 mm ammunition arrived in KIGALI on February 14, - 4,000 rounds of 105 mm ammunition, the bulk of which will be delivered on February 17, with the remainder being delivered on February 24.

2. MMC has just acquired 200 68-mm helicopter rockets. They will be transported to KIGALI on February 24 along with the remaining 105mm shells.

3. 3. The FAR's stock levels are alarmingly low for

- 122 mm shells,

- 120 mm mortar shells,

- 82 mm mortar shells,

- 81 mm mortar shells,

- 60 mm mortars on the ground,

- 60 mm mortars on AML.

*MMC is finally beginning to address the problem but will certainly call on Defense for certain categories of ammunition.*⁴¹⁹

To deal with the situation, there is an urgent need to supplement stocks. Thus, the author of the memo takes stock of the French Army's capabilities and what is available to help fill the Rwandan shortfall:

Army capabilities

- The 122 mm and 82 mm (Soviet) shells are not in stock.

- Stock of 120 mm mortar shells: 35,000 rounds of ammunition that constitute the

wartime allocation. In case of demand, 2,000 shells could be sold (unit price : 4,827 F).

- Stock of 81 mm mortar shells : 20 000 ammunitions. 400,000 are prohibited from use in training. However, as the risk of accidents is very low (one chance in a million shots fired), use in the Rwandan theater is entirely feasible. Two options are possible: a non-remunerated transfer or a remunerated transfer (unit price: 945 F).

- Stock of 60 mm mortar shells : important, this ammunition is no longer used in the Army. Moreover, it is struck by the same restrictions of use as the 81 mm ammunition. A non-remunerated transfer would be normal (unit price : 408 F).

- Stock of 60 mm mortar shells on AML: 20,000 intended for the needs of the Gendarmerie. The FAR have placed an order for 1,000 shells from Thomson-Brandt Armaments, which will not be able to supply them for another ten months. A repayable advance in kind could be granted to the company to enable it to fill the order immediately [...].

In the event that the situation continues to deteriorate and MMC decides to upgrade the Rwandan stocks by requesting DOD assistance, I propose the following responses: - remunerated transfer of 120mm mortar shells, - remunerated transfer of 81mm mortar shells, - non-remunerated transfer of 60mm mortar shells, - repayable advance in kind of 60mm mortar shells on AML, with the understanding that transportation is to be funded by MMC.⁴²⁰

The situation of the FAR at the beginning of the offensive of 8 February, 1993 was in any case considered sufficiently worrying to trigger a series of transfers and sales of arms to Rwanda.⁴²¹ This was not enough according to Colonel Delort, who was at the time the operational commander of the Noroît mechanism at the beginning of 1993, and who took it upon himself to pass on to his superiors the requests - extremely important in terms of volume, since they would allow several battalions to be equipped for a considerable period of time - which he also considered useful to the FAR, after having specified the transfers already made and the ministry that had provided the funding, mainly the Ministry of Defense.

I have the honor to address you a request for ammunition for the benefit of the Rwandan army, which is experiencing difficulties in the field, but also, for financial reasons, in the field of supplies (sic).

I can only insist on the need to provide substantial aid to the FAR if it is hoped that they will be able to contain the RPF and possibly improve their positions to re-establish a coherent front line. [...]

Summary of equipment provided to the FAR from 8 February to 4 March:

-796-

50 machine guns (MINDEF)
100,000 rounds of 12.7 ammunition (MINDEF)
4,000 105 mm shells (MINDEF)
200 67-mm helicopter rockets (Mincoop)
Mention a previous request to MMC
1,000 120-mm mortar shells
MINDEF decision of March 5 :
2,000 81 mm shells non-remunerated
1,000 60 mm shells non-remunerated.
Annex II. Ammunition request
100,000 rounds 50 on link (4-1)
100 000 rounds 50 on link (2-2-1).
1,000 HE rifle grenades (5-56)
1,000 (in addition to the 1,000 already requested) 120 HE mortar shells (KT)
200 shells 105 mm, Smk
1,000 hand grenades.⁴²²

There is no indication in the documents at our disposal that this materiel was actually delivered.

7.1.10.5 DELIVERING WEAPONS TO RWANDA

What weapons are delivered to Rwanda and when? The aim is to make an inventory of the weapons supplied by France to Rwanda between 1990 and 1994 and to put them back into perspective. Two major aspects emerge: most of the arms were delivered at a time when Habyarimana's regime was in serious difficulty, and they did not stop despite the provisions of the first Arusha agreements in the summer of 1992. The question arises as to French policy in this area in 1994 at the time of the genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda.

The deliveries known by the MMC (1990-1992)

As we have seen, the MMC is presented as the main transferee in Africa. Some French officials occasionally draw up reports on the arms sold or transferred to Rwanda, mixing remunerated and non-remunerated transfers, and sales by manufacturers. General Varret, head of the MMC until April 1992, mentions, for example, in his spring 1992 report, the various items of equipment delivered to Rwanda of which he was aware as head of the MMC. If we follow General Varret, the cost of these deliveries

amounts to 9,572,006.95 francs. According to this information, arms occupy only a very small percentage of this figure and the equipment that he was aware was delivered corresponds more to training and the maintenance of Rwandan vehicles:

Annex 2. Aid in equipment. Direct aid, which has been set at 4 MF for many years, reached 8.34 MF in 1991. This effort is being continued in the current year.

2.1. Main deliveries between October 1990 and May 1992.

October 1990. 100 68 mm rockets (437,000FF); 135,000 9 mm cartridges; 2,040 explosive shells 9 mm cartridges; 2,040 20 mm explosive shells; 2,040 60 mm explosive shells (1664,269FF); 10 TRC 340 (CGIE) posts (800650FF)

December 1990 : VHS video course ALAT) (2450FF)

January 1991 : Transmission equipment (44783 FF) ; 30 typewriters, copy machine (3363 FF) ; Control tools (58000 FF) ; Rhode and Schwartz test blank (Gie) (229167 FF) ; PJ case and MO equipment (283696 FF) ; Electrovalve lamps, etc. (3800FF) ; Audiovisual equipment (28925 FF).

February 1991. Binoculars, overhead projectors, screen, etc... (10373 FF) ; VOR receiver, test bench (52 500 FF)

March 1991. PM spare parts (Gie) (5805 FF) ; Transmission equipment (Gie) (99 280 FF)

Parachutes (359075 FF)

April 1991. TAP and CRAP equipment (28444 FF); 400 tear gas grenades (Gie) (99280 FF)

Clothing (3749 FF) TAP and CRAP equipment: 1 195 900 FF

May 1991. 6 STEYR MANNLICHER rifles (78546 FF); 5000 7.62 mm cartridges 7.62 mm (23 165 FF)

June 1991. 50 typewriters (Gie) (92263 FF); Goretex warm clothing (79052 FF). North Atlas overhaul (pradier : 547 281 FF ; véritas 255 000). Transmission equipment (Gie) : 32 920 FF). 1 helicopter Alouette II Artouste (500 000 FF)

July 1991. Photowatt modules (Gie) 6 900 FF. 1 000 sets of parkas, gloves and knee highs (328 000 FF). STEYR night binoculars (327 700 FF). 30 Chamois backpacks (10 500 FF)

August 1991. Spare parts AML (454608 FF) October 1991. 6 Renault 4L (Gie) (210564 FF)

November 1991. Repair of the North carburetor (46 980 FF)

January 1992. 10 SOWAMAG tactical vehicles (129 300). 2 E/R TELERAD (74 060 FF).

February 1992. Repair E/R SOCRAT (24722 FF). Repair of North 2501 de-icer (17 500 FF)

March 1992. Transmission assembly (Gie) (732 000 FF)

May 1992. Devices of 27 cm (7,500 FF); ALAT training documents

*1,626 FF; SOWAMAG 336 spare parts; MAG 7.62 + 12.7 support (231,000 FF).*⁴²³

According to General Varret, the deliveries announced for the second half of 1992, namely: “Alouette II Artouste (500,000 FF), 3rd and 4th helicopter repair kit (135,000 FF), 3 RASURA radars 490,000 FF; Transmission equipment 21,355 FF; 3 Peugeot 309 (175 179 FF; Parachute equipment: 333 469,58 FF”⁴²⁴ for a cost of 1,655,003.58 francs. The total cost amounted to 11,227,010.53 francs for the period 1990-1992.

At the beginning of 1993, when he left the Mission militaire de coopération rue Monsieur, General Varret produced a report for his successor, Huchon, in which he gave a similar overview of the transfers of which he was aware, and quantified their cost. This cost is constantly increasing, causing a real budget overrun, particularly because of the transport paid for by France, which occasionally rents Antonovs: from 4 million francs spent in 1990, aid in equipment and munitions rose to 9 million francs in 1991 and 14.2 million francs in 1992, while for the 1993 forecasts: “Initial amount planned: 11.5 MF; amount that cannot be reduced already committed or to be committed in 1993: 14.9 MF; Overrun: 3.4 MF.”⁴²⁵

These documents, which give only a partial view of the question, are significant in the sense that they show what the head of the MMC knew about the subject in the spring of 1992. General Varret did not distinguish between the different types of deliveries, the content of which raised questions. With the exception of October 1990, General Varret only mentions logistical equipment, dedicated to training or maintenance or handguns. However, this only gives a very imperfect account of the facts. A comparison with the SHD documents shows that, during the same period, France delivered heavy equipment on a massive scale,⁴²⁶ which General Varret does not mention. There are two possible explanations: General Varret is sincere, he reports what he knows, and these shipments, although massive, escaped him, or General Varret is lying and has falsified the document. The first solution is the most plausible because, from the study of the documentation gathered in the Mourgeon unit fonds, it appears that the MMC only very rarely intervened as

a transferee, contrary to the usual practice that has been mentioned.

In October 1990, France made the first remunerated transfers - in this case 135,000 9 mm cartridges, 2,040 20 mm cartridges and 2,004 shells for 60 mm mortars. The transferee is MMC through the Ministry of Defense. The transfer was made for the amount of 1,664,269.44 francs. The equipment was transported from Orleans on 5 and 12 October 1990. The regularization was carried out *a posteriori*.⁴²⁷ In the same month, a new remunerated transfer was made, this time of 1,000 rounds of 90 mm explosive shells for AMLs. The transferee mentioned this time is the Luchaire company⁴²⁸ which also provided transport on 24 October, 1990 at a cost of 1,634,490 francs.

There are no transfers, whether remunerated or non-remunerated, indicated for the year 1991, but several CIEEMG⁴²⁹ approvals. On the other hand, 1992 was a climax in terms of transfers. The first non-remunerated transfers were implemented in February 1992. These were three RASURA radars requested by Kigali and a "lot of land development," a euphemism that can refer to a wide range of realities, from shovels and pickaxes to barbed wire and anti-personnel mines. In this case, it was 20 fixed flare mines, model 50, 30 meters of slow fuse, 20 pyrotechnic detonators and 300 meters of barbed wire.⁴³⁰ The period of June, July and August 1992 was quite busy with regard to arms transfers, at a time when the French commitment to blocking the RPF's military and diplomatic claims before and during Arusha was significant.⁴³¹ France made two non-remunerated transfers: three RASURA⁴³² radars with environmental equipment through the MMC and, above all, the six 105 mm cannons with 2,400 explosive shells and 300 flare shells that the Rwandans had been demanding for a long time. Ammunition stocks were reinforced throughout the month of July 1992, in particular in the context of the ministerial decision of 21 July 1992, which in fact echoed a presidential decision already mentioned, granting two additional 105 mm cannons, 5,000 shells, as well as 20 12.7 mm machine guns and 32,400 12.7 mm cartridges.⁴³³ In addition, three remunerated transfers were granted in June 1992: 1,300 90 mm cartridges with explosive shells for AMLs were granted in June and transported on 17 July 1992 by Giat Industries, while MMC

was the transferee of 270 90 mm cartridges for AMLs from the *Éléments Français d'Assistance Opérationnelles* [French Operational Assistance Elements].⁴³⁴ In June 1992, MMC also delivered spare parts for the Alouette II.

7.1.10.6 OVERRIDING THE ARUSHA AGREEMENTS

The first Arusha agreements, which provided for the suspension of arms deliveries, did not hinder future movements, because the French found ways of getting around these provisions.

The subject worried the French authorities from the beginning of August 1992, when the content of the agreements became known. Dominique de Combes de Nayves wrote to Daniel Bernard, Roland Dumas' chief of staff, that the Arusha agreements "directly concern the French presence on the ground." These were Articles II-2, which provided for the entry into force of the cease-fire and "the suspension of supplies of munitions and any other war material in the field."⁴³⁵ The Ministry of Defense also took up the subject. François Nicoulaud wrote in a memo about the application of the Arusha agreements that "the first of these provisions could call into question the transfers envisaged by the Ministry of Defense to the Rwandan armed forces, i.e. 2,000 105 mm shells and 20 12.7 mm machine guns, with 32,400 rounds of ammunition."⁴³⁶ It should be noted that since the agreement provided for the withdrawal of foreign troops, the *Noroît* companies were in fact invited to leave Rwandan territory, as were all the DAMI. To settle the issue, an interministerial meeting was immediately convened, and Paul Dijoud, the Director of African and Malagasy Affairs, gave the main conclusions in a diplomatic telegram: he announced the signing of an amendment to the special agreement of 1975, the transformation of the status of the military in Rwanda into a cooperant (military technical advisor), and the continuation of arms deliveries notwithstanding the provisions of the first Arusha agreements. Ammunition and machine guns could still be delivered to Rwanda, provided that the transport was carried out "with the greatest possible discretion":

The signing of an amendment to the special Franco-Rwandan military assistance agreement of 18 July, 1975, as proposed by the Rwandan authorities, and which is the subject of a separate telegram, will make it possible to give legal status to all French military cooperants and DAMI personnel present

in Rwanda, who will thus be able to comply with the provisions of the Arusha agreement. With regard to the artillerymen, the Ministry of Defense will gradually and discreetly reduce their number in order to reduce the visibility of their presence. The small remaining team could be quickly supplemented, if necessary, by elements of our forces in the CAR.

The French authorities do not consider that the terms of the Arusha agreement are such as to call into question the transfers of machine guns and various munitions that were envisaged by the Ministry of Defense. Their delivery to Rwanda, which will be done with the greatest possible discretion, should take place soon.

The Arusha Agreement links the withdrawal of foreign troops to the effective establishment of GOMN. France, which wants to act only in agreement with the Rwandan authorities on this point in particular, would like to know how the Rwandan authorities envisage the presence of the Noroît detachment evolving once GOMN is operational. France does not want to be accused of having hindered the proper implementation of the Arusha Agreement.⁴³⁷

On 14 August, 1992, 2,000 105-mm shells, 20 additional 12.7-mm machine guns and 32,400 rounds of ammunition were sent to Rwanda.⁴³⁸

7.1.10.7 THE LAST TRANSFERS (SEPTEMBER 1992-APRIL 1994)

The last non-remunerated transfer in 1992 concerned spare parts for 105 mm guns, which were delivered at the end of October. The last remunerated transfer concerned spare parts for signaling equipment.⁴³⁹ It was not until the RPF offensive on 8 February, 1993 that non-remunerated and remunerated transfers became significant again, as part of the strategy developed to prevent the RPF from taking Kigali.⁴⁴⁰ A few days after the start of the attack, the Ministry of Defense approved the transfer of 4,000 105 mm explosive shells, followed by 25 mounts for 12.7 mm machine guns. In the latter case, it is noteworthy that an additional delivery was requested by Colonel Delort in a message addressed to Saint-Astier in which he asked for the addition of missing parts for machine guns delivered a week earlier, and which are not mentioned among the equipment that had been transferred in the documents at our disposal, “otherwise, these machine guns, which have now been in Rwanda for nine days, would still be unusable.”⁴⁴¹ In March 1993, the stocks were supplemented by 2,000 81 mm mortar shells, to which should be added various equipment such as chain saws, a set of artillery pointing devices

and four theodolites, as well as various spare parts.⁴⁴² The remunerated transfers concerned, in particular, 1,000 120 mm RTF1 explosive shells, parachute fabrics and spare parts for the Alouette II.⁴⁴³ In total, all the non-remunerated transfers represent a cost of 19,530,165.62 francs and the cost of the remunerated transfers of 11,917,988.48 francs according to the documents at our disposal.

According to the documents at our disposal, there are no more remunerated or non-remunerated transfers after March 1993. On the other hand, there are slight traces of evidence in the French archives showing that Rwandan requests went through official channels, indicating a desire to obtain arms after the beginning of the Tutsi genocide. A file from the Direction du Renseignement Militaire [Directorate of Military Intelligence] shows specific requests made by Colonel Ntahobari, who instructs the agent to “transmit to the ‘French government’ the following requests that were made by the Rwandan military staff, still in place and functioning in Kigali.”⁴⁴⁴ The request, formulated as an “absolute emergency,” mentions 7.62 mm ammunition, 5.56 mm ammunition, and 60 mm mortar shells. The DRM plays its role in forwarding this information; the response is not known.

7.1.10.8 ARMING RWANDA. AN INDUSTRIAL AFFAIR

Approvals issued by the CIEEMG

Arms deliveries to Rwanda also involve French manufacturers. Through the intermediary of companies approved for the export of war material, they are subject to a different procedure from that concerning the direct or remunerated transfers mentioned above. The MIP report addressed this question, while remaining vague about the nature of the documents it used, adopting a laconic expression: “On the basis of the information it was able to obtain...”⁴⁴⁵ In the context of the MIP’s work, two units act upstream as filters to gather the documents, analyze their conclusions, collect the elements deemed most significant, and transmit them to the next level. The conclusions of the MIP are in fact dependent on the information transmitted by the Mourgeon unit. Two boxes kept at the SHD and divided into thirteen files are our main concern.⁴⁴⁶ The first twelve

files are constituted by different institutions of the army, the thirteenth is a “review” file containing the information transmitted to Bernard Cazeneuve. We then compared these data with those held in the collections of the General Secretariat of National Defense (SGDN) at the Hôtel des Invalides and the SHD.

Theoretically, the CIEEMG meets only once a month, a rhythm that is incompatible with the needs of the Rwandans, which are essentially dictated by the necessities of time. Thus, a “fast-track procedure” was introduced in October 1990. This procedure, which in fact shortens the deadlines, sometimes leads to the granting of an export authorization and to regularization in reverse, marking the urgency of obtaining approvals without concern for respecting classic administrative procedures. The intensity of the activity of the inter-ministerial commission during the first months of the war in Rwanda can be measured over time. Between 1990 and 1994, there were 51 CIEEMG reports of approvals for a total of 406 million francs worth of arms. Bernard Cazeneuve was given this table which summarizes the evolution of approvals issued by the CIEEMG, and which is transcribed in the MIP report⁴⁴⁷:

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Number of CIEEGM reports	4	3	4	16	11	17	6	1
Total in MF	50	19	116	191	48	122	44	1

We have translated these data into several graphs. The first concerns the evolution of the number of CIEEGM per year (period 1987-1994).

The main limitation of this approach, which depends solely on the resources made available to the members of the Parliamentary Information Mission, is that it only allows for an analysis at the annual level. As a result, it leaves out the detailed chronology of events in Rwanda. Our own consultation of all of the minutes relating to the CIEEMG’s accreditations in the SGDN and Mourgeon unit’s fonds allows us to refine our knowledge by taking into

account the monthly evolution of these accreditations between 1990 and 1994. The graph shows that, as with the transfers, it is at the time when Rwanda is in the greatest difficulty that the pace of the delivery of approvals accelerates.

The months of September to December 1990 appear to be the first significant wave in the evolution of CIEEMG approvals granted to industrialists, and it is notoriously the highest. The curve then oscillates between periods of decline, when negotiations are taking place, and growth when Kigali is threatened with capture by the RPF.

The materials delivered

The industrialists cited among those who deliver arms to Rwanda through this procedure are: Aérospatiale, Eurocopter, Euromissile, Thomson Brandt armaments, Thomson CSF, the company Panhard et Levasseur, the company Luchaire Defense, manufacturer of Giat Industries, Sopelem-Sofretec. Consultation of the preparatory work of the Mourgeon unit for the MIP, which summarizes the types of equipment that have received an AEMG, leads to the same conclusion concerning the AEMG granted. Concerning air transport equipment: three Gazelle helicopters, six Rasura radars, four Milan firing posts, six 68 mm SNEB rocket launchers, six 120 mm mortars, 50 12.7 mm machine guns. Regarding ammunition: 5,550 rounds of 60 mm mortar ammunition, 2,000 rounds of 81 mm mortar ammunition, 6,000 rounds of 120 mm mortar ammunition, 1,300 90 mm shells for AMLs, 800 68 mm rockets, 100,000 rounds of 12.7 mm ammunition, 5,000 rounds of 7.62 mm ammunition, 700,000 rounds of 5.56 mm ammunition.⁴⁴⁸ In terms of chronological distribution, 13 AEMGs are dated 1990, 9 in 1991, 33 in 1992, 23 in 1993, for a total cost of 130 million francs.⁴⁴⁹

The CIEEMG did not wait until October 1990 to grant approvals to industrialists so that they could then obtain an AEGM. In 1987, four are already mentioned. They concern equipment relating to the radio system and surveillance as well as HF, VHF transmission and radiocommunication equipment, for a total cost of 50 million francs. In 1988, three others are mentioned at a cost of 19 million francs: binoculars and, for the first time, weapons for Gazelle helicopters, in this case 3,000

SNEB⁴⁵⁰ 68-mm air-to-ground rockets. The following year, there are four new ones at a cost of 116 million francs. The level of equipment went up in range, since apart from the transmission equipment, there were four Milan 2 firing posts and 16 Milan 2 anti-tank missiles,⁴⁵¹ followed by 500 68 mm SNEB rockets, again for the Gazelles.⁴⁵² On the same day, approval was granted for 10 120 mm rifled mortars, 1,000 rounds of 120 mm explosive ammunition, 1,000 rounds of 120 mm smoke ammunition and 100 rounds of 120 mm pre-flash ammunition. In 1990, CIEEGM approvals (sales level accepted) appeared before the RPF offensive. Thus, 12,000 defensive hand grenades were recorded on 20 September 1990. On the same day, 15 60 mm mortars, 15 60 mm commando mortars and 4 Milan 2 firing posts, as well as 16 missiles and parts relating to their maintenance, were approved.

In concrete terms, the month of October 1990 already shows the nature of the armaments for which approval was requested and the way in which the procedure could be short-circuited to meet the demands of Rwanda and the urgency of the situation. From 1990 to 1993, the time between CIEEMG and AEMG approval, which in normal circumstances can be several weeks or even months, sometimes shortened significantly. The equipment receiving CIEEMG and AEMG approval concerns radio transmission equipment or direction-finding equipment, land or air transport equipment, mortars, helicopter rockets and ammunition. Industrialists sometimes use French army stocks to fill their orders. This is the case, for example, with 7.62 mm ammunition, for which the approval is dated 18 October 1990 and the delivery 29 October 1990: “ammunition taken from French army stocks.”⁴⁵³ This is not the only example. The minutes of the CIEEMG of 18 June 1992, concerning the request for approval from Giat Industries for 3,000 rounds of 90 mm F1 explosive ammunition for AMLs, state: “old material for which transfer is requested from the Army through the DGA/DRI.”⁴⁵⁴ The AEMG No. 921264 also mentions the delivery of 1,300 rounds of 90 mm ammunition on 15 July 1992.⁴⁵⁵ In addition, the urgency of the situation sometimes leads to a short-circuiting of the normal procedure. For example, the 400 68 mm SNEB rockets for helicopters received an AEMG dated 17 October 1990, but the CIEEMG’s minutes of approval were dated 18 October 1990,

with the only restriction being that the number of 400 should not be exceeded.⁴⁵⁶ Sometimes, the CIEEMG puts the brakes on certain applications for approval. For example, still on 18 October 1990, it refused approval for 90 mm hollow charge ammunition (OCC). The AEMG only mentions 1,000 rounds of 90 mm HE/AP ammunition and 100 smoke bombs on condition that payment is made in cash.⁴⁵⁷ It may happen that the CIEEMG formulates a pure and simple refusal. This is the case, for example, with the approval given on 16 April 1992 to Giat Industry, which was reported in the press in October 1999.⁴⁵⁸ Giat Industries wished to export 5,000 APMB 51-55 anti-personnel mines, 15,000 APDV 59 anti-personnel mines, 200 traction igniters, 200 pressure igniters, and 200 wire-break igniters. In the information, it is noted: "These materials exist in stock at the French Army which can transfer them to us. Request for transfer made today." In the minutes, the opinion of the CIEEMG is indicated as unfavorable and the approval is refused.⁴⁵⁹

Formally, the last minutes of the CIEEGM to receive a favorable opinion, dated 20 January 1994, concerned transmission equipment.⁴⁶⁰ The request for approval made by Thomson CSF concerning 2,500 rounds of 120 mm mortar ammunition and 800 rounds of ammunition for 120 mm mortars, which was placed on the agenda on 17 February, 1994, was postponed twice⁴⁶¹ before being refused, again twice.⁴⁶² A few AEMGs were still issued, relating to a 7.65 mm pistol, spare parts for 120 mm mortars, spare parts for Alouette IIIs and for AMLs destined for the MAM, a 9 mm para pistol and three magazines. The last one is dated 6 April, 1994 and concerns a new 9 mm pistol which apparently did not pass through customs.⁴⁶³

7.1.10.9 ARMS DELIVERIES TO RWANDA: HOW TO STOP THEM?

On 8 April, 1994, the day after the attack and at the start of an unprecedented wave of violence that France was struggling to analyze, a memo signed by General Achille Lerche, SGDN, indicated to the Ministry of the Budget that "as a precautionary measure, and pending a decision that may be taken in the short term, I would ask you to suspend the validity of the AEMGs issued for Rwanda and Burundi."⁴⁶⁴ The memo was copied to Matignon, to the diplomatic advisor Bernard de Montferrand,

to the Dana technical advisor and to the head of the military cabinet, Rear Admiral Lecointre; to the Ministry of Defense (cabinet and DGA/DRI); to the cabinet of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; to the director of the cabinet of the Minister of the Economy; to the director of the cabinet of the Minister of Cooperation; and to various departments of the SGDN. Interestingly, the Élysée is not mentioned among the recipients.

The SGDN did not address the Prime Minister directly until 25 April, 1994: “Following the initial events in Rwanda and Burundi, I took, in the letter cited in reference [this is the memo to the Minister of the Budget], precautionary measures aimed at suspending the validity of export authorizations for war materials to these countries.”⁴⁶⁵ He then argued to Matignon that this initiative was well-founded: the risks of “upsetting the political and ethnic balance in these two countries” remained great, but were minimal for French companies, and some of the equipment had already been shipped.⁴⁶⁶ It was endorsed by the Prime Minister on 5 May, 1994, following the select committee meeting of 3 May, 1994: “As decided at the select committee meeting of 3 May, 1994, prior export authorizations and export authorizations relating to Rwanda, which are currently valid, are provisionally suspended. No new authorization will be granted until further notice.”⁴⁶⁷ There is no indication in the archives consulted that AEMGs were granted after the initial memo from the SGDN of 8 April 1994.

That same 25 April, the Director of African and Malagasy Affairs sent a memo to the Minister of Foreign Affairs that made two recommendations. On a political level, he noted that “it is not up to France to place itself in the front line. ...] everything must be done to support the only external actors still active, i.e. the four countries in the region.” On a military level, he adds, “we must avoid being accused of supplying arms to the conflict. It would therefore be appropriate to give a negative response to the request for the supply of arms made by the Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is currently in Paris.”⁴⁶⁸ It is surprising, to say the least, that on 25 April, the question of how to respond to a request for the supply of arms - especially from the interim government - can still be raised.

It is not surprising, then, that controversy quickly erupted over the continued circulation of war materials after the start of the Tutsi genocide and the embargo decreed on 16 May 1994 by the UN. Later, these controversies visibly worried the French authorities, particularly at the time of the MIP's work in 1998, leading in turn to the production of briefing memos⁴⁶⁹ intended essentially to reassure the executive on this issue, worried about the idea of the French State being held responsible. Thus, those in charge of the "Rwanda units" launched investigations to find out more about the actions of private companies, such as SOFREMAS or Dyl Invest. The latter is the subject of a special sub-file in the fonds kept at the SHD, which notes that contracts were indeed signed, but that the company was unable to honor them, which triggered criminal proceedings.⁴⁷⁰

The case of SOFREMAS triggered, as early as 1996, a dispute between the SGDN and the Controller General of the Armies (CGA), the former condemning the company's actions, the latter arguing that French law had not been transgressed. In fact, according to the minutes of the CIEEMG of 11 December, 1996,⁴⁷¹ the French authorities found nothing to prosecute on the criminal level. The CGA published three reports clearing the company, an effort that may have been motivated by the link established between this company and the French State in the press, which unearthed a "proforma" document showing orders sent by the IRG to the company and the offer received in response. In an initial report sent to the office of the Minister of Defense on 20 November, 1996,⁴⁷² the CGA first mentioned the law applicable to SOFREMAS and the necessary distinction to be made between international trade - which concerns commercial exchanges between two foreign countries - and the export of war materiel, "for which there is export (or re-export), that is to say, the crossing of the French border to the exterior." According to the CGA, prospecting by a company is perfectly allowed: "It would only be subject to authorization if it led to the dissemination of information promoting the manufacture or reproduction of these materials" or "compromising their effectiveness." The prior authorization decided by the CIEEMG is only necessary if there is an export or re-export according to the decree-law of 18 April 1939. If it is

only about trade, this one is inapplicable, according to the same decree-law and to the Hernu circular of 3 October, 1983. The same applies to delivery. Still according to the CGA's analysis, in the case of international trade, the Ministry of Defense must certainly be informed according to the decree of 12 March, 1973, but "it is not indicated that this declaration must be made beforehand, nor even when it must be made. In the case of SOFREMAS, the CGA emphasizes that all of its operations were carried out before the embargo and that it "had no obligation in terms of prospecting, which can be assimilated to the first contact made by the Rwandan authorities in February-March 1994." The CGA links the activity of SOFREMAS to international trade, so no authorization from the French government was necessary, and it refutes the existence of a delivery. The CGA concludes:

SOFREMAS was therefore able to lawfully conduct negotiations, and in particular to submit its offer, in the absence of any authorization [...]. Carefully analyzing the words of the company's manager, it is clear that he was about to commit an error, whether intentional or not, in terms of negotiation: he believed, and still believes, that a negotiation concerning an export to a country not subject to an embargo should not give rise to prior authorization. If he had found a supplier for Rwanda in France, he would probably not have hesitated to submit an offer without authorization. But this is only a guess.⁴⁷³

According to the CGA, the activities of SOFREMAS in 1994 therefore potentially bear the mark of an error of judgment, at worst a moral fault, but in no way, according to it, a transgression of the law.

This effort continued in the following days with the production of two reports which completed his reasoning.⁴⁷⁴ In the case of the date of the embargo that he mentions the day before, 26 June 1994 (which is not the right date), he notes that it corresponds to its implementation, "whereas it was decreed on 17 May 1994 (UN Resolution 918). This significant time difference has no consequences for SOFREMAS: it suspended its operations on 6 May.⁴⁷⁵ He notes that the DRI was not able to document the existence of negotiations or arms deliveries to South Africa, in respect of which the embargo was lifted on 25 May, 1994 by UN Resolution 919: "SOFREMAS' assertion concerning the South African origin of the equipment it

was planning to deliver to Rwanda, in its 'pro forma' offer of 5 May, 1994, is therefore plausible," he writes. The CGA does not rule out the intervention of a third party to carry out the delivery; in any case, SOFREMAS denies that a supplier was substituted for it, but it cannot formally prove it. The third report, dated 27 November, 1996,⁴⁷⁶ returns once again to the subject. The author specifies this time that "the date of 26 June does not correspond to anything, and that it was indeed from 17 May that it was forbidden to deliver to Rwanda." He does not deny the existence of the decision of the SGDN of 8 April 1994 prohibiting the delivery of arms. While he admits that "with regard to this decision, SOFREMAS would be in violation, even if it had only negotiated an offer after the date," he contests any legal value: "On the one hand, in fact, the president of the CIEEMG has no regulatory power of his own, and therefore could not express a personal opinion, or even his intention to oppose any request for export; on the other hand, by virtue of the decree-law of 18 April, 1939, the possibility of expressing himself on transfers from foreign State to foreign State, that is to say, on international trade, escapes him. The decision it took on 8 April 1994 therefore has no legal significance."⁴⁷⁷

In the absence of significant archives in the collections consulted in France,⁴⁷⁸ it is impossible to account with certainty for the existence of arms flows from France to Rwanda after the start of the Tutsi genocide. However, the accusations have considerably hampered the French authorities *a posteriori*, particularly at the time of the MIP's work. Thus, Louis Gautier,⁴⁷⁹ defense advisor at Matignon, wrote a memo dated 15 April, 1998 for the attention of Lionel Jospin. The feverishness of the Socialist Prime Minister is palpable in his annotations.⁴⁸⁰ The decision of the SGDN to suspend the AEMGs on 8 April 1994 is systematically mentioned.⁴⁸¹ On the subject of the transfer of French armed forces equipment free of charge, information on this "sensitive point" is requested from the office of the Ministry of Cooperation. It is written in the margin: "We must take stock of this - find out about this practice - what is being done today?" The memo reviews exports and mentions the decision of the SGDN to suspend the AEMGs on 8 April, 1994, which calls for a new handwritten comment: "The massacres began on 6 April." The memo emphasizes that the sale of foreign material without transit through France

or illicit trafficking by French companies is not subject to control:

*Moreover, the investigations carried out so far by the services have not provided proof either of the reality or of the non-existence of illicit trafficking [...] the communication of information to the fact-finding mission relating to deliveries authorized by the CIEEMG or by simplified procedure (DAEMGS), does not, however, retrace all of the licit movements carried out by France, in particular the non-remunerated transfers of the military cooperation mission, nor a fortiori the licit movements or misappropriations.*⁴⁸²

This last passage is commented on by hand: “We check beforehand the procedural legal framework,” while the rest of the memo recognizes that “in any case, the simple information coming from the examination of CIEEGM documents differs from the public declarations of Messrs Ballardur and Juppé.” This aspect is confirmed by a new handwritten memo: “There were a few deliveries after the Arusha agreements” and on information reflecting his desire to obtain information from the source: “I called A. Juppé and E. Ballardur.”⁴⁸³

All of the post-1994 investigations conclude that there were no arms transfers or sales to the genocidaires after the suspension of the AEMGs and after the embargo. There is nothing in the archives consulted that strongly contradicts this finding. It is certain, however, that the IRG sought to obtain weapons from the French State, from private companies and from abroad. Some of these weapons were seen in Zaire or Rwanda at the time of the genocide; it is difficult to establish with certainty the identity of the seller.⁴⁸⁴

7.1.11 Three institutions face the Rwandan crisis: for compliance with financial regulations and development policies

French development aid was experiencing fairly obvious signs of crisis at the end of the 1980s. The Hessel Report, which was submitted to Prime Minister Michel Rocard in 1990 but not published, is an illustration of this. It is only the continuation of a long series of reports commissioned on this subject that were sometimes published and sometimes shelved. This aid relies on three institutions: the Ministry of Cooperation and Development, the Central Fund for Economic Cooperation

and the Ministry of the Economy and Finance, including the Treasury Department.⁴⁸⁵ Two fundamental problems are posed to the French system.

The first problem is that the franc zone is falling behind in macroeconomic terms, as we have already mentioned. The performance of the franc zone is inferior to that of other African countries and much inferior to that of the Newly Industrialized Countries (South Korea, Taiwan), which managed to emerge from poverty in the 1960s and 1970s. At a time when new projects are opening up - particularly in Eastern Europe but also in former Indochina - the question of the means and scope of the various institutions mentioned is one of the challenges. It should also be added that in the post-Cold War period that began in the early 1990s, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were gaining power, advocating draconian structural adjustment policies (SAPs). These policies were based on strong conditionality: reduction of public spending in exchange for new loans. From this perspective, the franc zone and the countries in the "field" came under intense scrutiny. At that time, France intended to remain in control of its major economic orientations, but the financing needs of African States were enormous.

Secondly, the French State made a number of important decisions in the area of development. Thus, at the Franco-African summit in Dakar in 1989,⁴⁸⁶ François Mitterrand decided on debt cancellation measures for 35 African States considered "very poor." In June 1990, he decided to transform loans into grants for the Least Developed Countries, i.e. the poorest countries. The question of donations, particularly monetary donations, is not without its problems. Is it "easy money" for a certain number of carefully selected States? What role should certain institutions play, in particular the *Caisse centrale de coopération économique* (CCCE, Central Fund for Economic Cooperation), which specializes in project aid?

These questions are far from being purely theoretical for our purpose. On 1 October 1990, Juvénal Habyarimana was in Washington to negotiate a structural adjustment plan with the IMF and the World Bank. The 1990-1994 period saw a profound socio-economic deterioration for the Rwandan people during which international aid

- bilateral or multilateral - was very much in demand by the Rwandan government. What was the attitude of these three institutions, the Ministry of Cooperation and Development, the Central Fund for Economic Cooperation and the Ministry of the Economy, to these requests? How did they view the evolution of Rwanda? Finally, what was their decision-making power in an environment undergoing profound changes?

While the archives of the Ministry of Cooperation and Development show significant gaps, particularly for the Jacques Pelletier period, the archives of the Central Fund for Economic Cooperation and of the Ministry of Economy and Finance kept at the SAEF, as well as a certain number of diplomatic telegrams from the Kigali post, allow for a better understanding of the role of these different institutions and the policies that were implemented.

The 1990-1991 period was characterized by competition between the institutions for the definition of their scope of action and a certain limitation of their action vis-à-vis the political power. However, in 1992 and at the beginning of 1993, these institutions tightened in the face of the aid and development policy being implemented in Rwanda. The year 1993 and the beginning of 1994 were characterized by the Arusha process, its completion and its blockage. The latter was internal, specific to the various Rwandan forces and in particular to the actions of Habyarimana. There is a second block, that posed by the IMF and the World Bank, which France has joined. International aid can only be conditional on a structural adjustment plan and the effective implementation of the Arusha agreements. During this period, however, the warnings issued by the Kigali post painted a vivid picture of Rwanda's economic and social conditions and the complete dilapidation of the Rwandan State.

7.1.11.1 DEFINING NEW AREAS OF ACTION AND THE LIMITS OF THE INSTITUTIONALIST APPROACH TO POLITICAL POWER (1990-1991)

The decisions announced by President François Mitterrand at La Baule (June 1990), particularly from the point of view of economic action in favor of development, raise profound questions about the role of the Ministry of Cooperation and Development, the Central Fund for Economic Cooperation, and the Ministry of

Economy and Finance. It should be noted that these different institutions are complementary (the CCCE grants financial loans for development projects; the Ministry of Cooperation and Development provides development expertise; the Ministry of Economy and Finance provides financing⁴⁸⁷), which does not prevent certain tensions between them.

The transformation of loans to LDCs into grants introduces an upheaval. This risks ruining the action of the CCCE, which nevertheless benefits from measures that are favorable to it, in particular the extension of the “field”⁴⁸⁸ to a certain number of African countries, such as Namibia in May 1990. A fax sent by Jean-Michel Severino, head of the Financial Affairs and Geographical Coordination Department (FEC), clearly specifies the dangers that are on the horizon. Jean-Michel Severino indicates the importance of the amounts at stake, i.e., 3.8 billion in non-project assistance, including one billion in budgetary aid “which the Minister for Cooperation and Development orders under his sole authority.” After mentioning that “financial assistance is a determining element of policy towards our African partners: in this sense, motivated by political as well as economic considerations,” he indicated that “financed entirely from budgetary funds, it is logical that they should be managed by State administrations.” He is therefore in favor of the need to “build a procedure of instruction and management that associates all these interlocutors, while reserving for the State authorities their responsibilities and duties in financing that are placed under their direct influence.” Thus, he would like to see an organization such as “the separation between authorizing officer and accountant, which is one of the characteristics of the management of current budgetary aid, a security to which both the financiers and the political authorities (in line with the President of the Republic at La Baule) should be sensitive.” He advocates a tripartite appraisal of aid (CCCE, MCD, Treasury) and precise follow-up “(verification of conditionalities and realization of allocations), which would give the resulting payment instructions to the local CCCE agency [...]. A prior opinion from the CCCE branch director can be envisaged.”⁴⁸⁹ For Jean-Michel Severino, it is certainly a question of rationalizing

French cooperation, of putting forward the criteria of a reaffirmed and assumed conditionality, and of taking advantage of La Baule to redesign French cooperation.

Philippe Jurgensen's correspondence⁴⁹⁰ shows an equal concern for firmness: "Recourse to donations for operations of this kind [i.e., outside of projects] risks having very perverse effects with regard to the proper use of the means implemented [...] the poorest countries need money, but even more so, they need sound management." From Philippe Jurgensen's point of view, the purpose of French cooperation is to integrate the assisted countries into globalization: "The danger would then be to make these countries definitively assisted, turning away from market mechanisms, whereas they must on the contrary prepare themselves, albeit gradually, to be competitive." He also insists on the rules of conditionality: "It corresponds to the concern not to accompany the increased generosity of our financing with a relaxation of the rules on the proper use of funds." In the context of a reflection on a possible cooperation agency that would centralize all the actors in cooperation, the author of an unsigned memo, dated 22 October, 1990 and undoubtedly intended for the Minister of the Economy and Finance, clearly outlines the political and economic risks that weigh on the French cooperation windfall: "Contrary to certain views of the cooperation departments, there can be no "fungibility" of financial instruments: the envelopes allocated on the one hand to the FAC [Fonds d'Aide et de Coopération], and on the other hand to the "central fund" donations must be respected, otherwise no effective forecasting of the interventions of the central fund could be ensured."

On 26 October, 1990, a statement of decisions issued by the Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Budget and the Ministry of Cooperation and Development detailed the procedures for allocating grants to countries in the field of cooperation. It details the procedure for non-project grants. It specifies the countries concerned ("countries in the field of cooperation that have benefited from the debt cancellation measure announced by the President of the Republic in Dakar") and the method: "appraisal of the grant by a joint mission comprising a chargé de mission from the Ministry of

Cooperation, a representative of the Caisse centrale and the financial advisor, head of mission,” “decision by the supervisory board of the Caisse centrale, based on the mission report” [...] “control of compliance with conditionality and points of application of the grants [which] is carried out jointly by the head of the cooperation mission and the local director of the Caisse centrale.” It was signed by Pierre Bérégovoy and Jacques Pelletier.⁴⁹¹

If the instruments of French cooperation did not undergo a “revolution” in the form of an overhaul within a Cooperation Agency, the creation of administrative texts coordinating the action of the three institutions in charge of development must undoubtedly be considered as progress. The decisions that will be taken in terms of economic and financial aid to Rwanda will clash with this carefully crafted decision-making process.

The economic and especially financial aid that Rwanda requested from France at the end of 1990 and the beginning of 1991 responded to a desperate need for currency. At the end of 1990, Rwanda no longer had the currency to import the materials and finished products necessary for its economy.⁴⁹² The aid it requested from France was not the first: in 1989, Rwanda had already requested balance of payments assistance, which was refused.⁴⁹³ We have already pointed out that the mission was sent after the fact, which is not the usual practice. The “tripartite French evaluation mission [was] scheduled for 9-12 April, 1991”⁴⁹⁴ and “following the interministerial mission held on the evening of 15 April at the Ministry of Cooperation and Development, the memorandum prepared by the financial mission and devoted to balance of payments assistance of 70 million FF was accepted as is.”⁴⁹⁵ In this diplomatic telegram signed by Jean-Michel Severino, “as planned, the project will be presented to the supervisory board of the CCCE on 19 April 1991.” Three conclusions can be drawn from this chronology. We noted the unusual fact that a mission was sent after the decision to grant the funds, the news of which was announced to the French ambassador in Kigali, who was responsible for transmitting the news to the Rwandan government on 9 March 1991.⁴⁹⁶ The interministerial meeting was held after the interministerial mission that had taken place at the Ministry of Cooperation and Development. Finally, the CCCE endorses the project after the fact.

The decision-making procedure, which was very hasty, did indeed comply with the statement of instructions issued by the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the Ministry of Cooperation and Development, but it hardly respected the decision-making process and the freedom of choice of the CCCE. Finally, in a personal capacity, Jean-Michel Severino endorses a decision that is hardly in keeping with the spirit of what he wrote a few months earlier to Philippe Jurgensen. This setback for French economic and financial institutions in charge of development is, however, only temporary.

7.1.11.2 THE TIGHTENING OF FRENCH INSTITUTIONS IN THE FACE OF THE RWANDAN SITUATION (APRIL 1991-EARLY 1993)

The economic, social and financial situation in Rwanda, as well as the application of the Structural Adjustment Plan, were assessed by several missions. Memos found at the SAEF attest to the astonishment of some of the envoys, particularly during the spring 1991 mission:

Nothing is computerized. There is IBM equipment but it is only used for word processing. Benzaid⁴⁹⁷ angry with the Rwandans. No real Treasury. The coop is drafting a budget nomenclature. Launched a State accounting plan. UNDP project to introduce Sydonia and computerization of debt.⁴⁹⁸

A report dating from the end of 1991 reassesses the state of the Rwandan economy and the crisis of the late 1980s: “a great crisis hit the country in 1989/90.” The figures show very worrying developments. In fact, “in 1991, the GDP amounted to 181 billion FRW, i.e., in constant currency, a drop of 3.5% compared to 1990. More seriously, GDP *per capita* has fallen by about 22% over the last three years.” Looking more closely at the major economic aggregates, the report notes how the war is unbalancing the fragile Rwandan State: “The most significant slippage is in military expenditure, which in 1991 represented 37% of current State expenditure, compared to 14% in 1989. On the other hand, the Ministries of Health and Education were heavily penalized, as their relative share of the budget fell from 30% in 1989 to 15% in 1991, while current expenditure in the 1991 budget increased by 14.5%.” The fragile Rwandan State is buckling under the demands of

the Rwandan Ministry of Defense and the government.⁴⁹⁹

The report of the financial mission led by Michel Oblin,⁵⁰⁰ financial advisor for Africa at the Treasury, assisted by Mr. Jean-Baptiste Fournier, geographic officer at the Ministry of Cooperation and Development, and Mrs. Fernandez of the CCCE in December 1992, is even more severe. It points out the limits of structural adjustment and states that

[...] the last IMF-World Bank mission was unable to commit to a schedule for negotiating a program and made its return conditional on the signing of a peace agreement. The other donors we met (EEC, Belgium, Germany, USAID) were cautious, stressing that the economy is becoming very dependent on politics [...]. Many emphasize the role of France, which, by maintaining its soldiers, appears to some as a supporter of the regime [...].

The situation of the reserves, which have been sufficient up to now because of the total sluggishness of the economy, does not justify balance of payments assistance. Such a contribution could even free up foreign currency for arms purchases.

[...] the immediate payment of French aid would not be understood by other donors, or even by certain Rwandan political leaders. France's reservation will have a definite diplomatic significance.⁵⁰¹

This telegram signed by Georges Martres differs somewhat in tone from the telegrams regularly sent by the French ambassador. The archives reveal that the draft was written, word for word, by Michel Oblin and accepted as such by Ambassador Martres. This diplomatic telegram is important because it marks a strong position: the refusal of non-project aid to the balance of payments based on the consensus of the donors present in Rwanda. Finally, it explicitly states what the direct transfers of funds to the National Bank of Rwanda can be used for. The notes taken by Michel Oblin are edifying. From his meeting with the EEC representative, he drew the following analyses:

The economy is linked to politics. Some people do not want to lose power. Arusha. Total impasse.

[...] there are bloody settlements of accounts every night. There is terror.

[...]

Everything is linked to politics. France is the only one who can bring the State to its senses. The French army is seen as a supporter of the regime in place.⁵⁰²

The Belgians made the same observation: "Politics overwhelms everything. It

prevents any progress, any recovery.” For Germany, “Arusha is at an impasse. All the resources are allocated to the projects [...] purchase of arms and food, 50% of which is diverted by the military leaders [...]” Germany confirms that the projections show that there is no need for foreign currency. From his meeting with the “banks” on 17 December, he noted: “The BNR buys weapons with the currency brought by the donors and the IMF; the balances with the advances.” The meeting that preceded the sending of the mission, attended by Jean-Michel Severino, Jean-Baptiste Fournier, Alain Chetaille⁵⁰³ and the representative of the Quai d’Orsay, noted the thoughts of the first named: “Go back to Matignon and the Élysée. We need a very clear diplomatic green light. Make the link with Arusha. If we put in foreign currency, it will go to armaments [...]”

The decision of the financial mission received strong support from Jean-Claude Trichet, Director of the Treasury, dated 26 January, 1993. The letter he wrote, intended for the Minister of the Economy and Finance, was based on the consensus established by the financial backers:

The entire financial community has decided to suspend its aid as long as the macroeconomic conditions are not met to allow a resumption of the recovery policy. This requires the successful conclusion of the Arusha negotiations [...] in order to restore peace, internal political stability and the authority of the government, and to reduce military expenditure to a level that is sustainable for the State budget [...].

Under these conditions, the mission concluded that it was impossible for France to grant adjustment aid. Jean-Claude Trichet concludes:

I have the feeling that the economic and financial repercussions of the Rwandan conflict are insufficiently taken into account in the definition of French policy towards Rwanda. France’s political and military commitment in Rwanda gives weight to its word. It seems to me that it is our responsibility to speak with the utmost firmness in this regard and to hold President Habyarimana and all Rwandan parties accountable for the economic and financial decline of their country if they do not quickly reach a peace agreement that is duly respected and allows for a resumption of support from the international financial community.⁵⁰⁴

Finally, he suggested that the Minister send the aide-mémoire of the financial mission to the Secretary General of the Élysée, which “could on this occasion be given to the Rwandan authorities, with a memo expressing

these concerns.”⁵⁰⁵ A few days earlier, on 15 January, 1993, Jean-Marie Bruno and Christian Szersnowicz had received the Rwandan ambassador to France and François Kanimba, director of the structural adjustment program, at the Ministry of Cooperation. They reminded them of the importance that France attached to the “current peace and national reconciliation process” and the need to obtain a new macroeconomic framework agreement from “Bretton-Woods.” They state that “France will also be present alongside the Rwandans with other donors to contribute to the success of the demobilization and integration program for the military.”⁵⁰⁶ For representatives of the Ministry of Cooperation, it is clear that the French contribution can only be made within the framework of a peace and structural adjustment process. The letter from Jean-Claude Trichet only confirms and supports their statement. The representatives of the two institutions are on the same line. However, the Director of the Treasury is not as committed to the issue of mobilizing and integrating the military. The time has come for conditionality to be applied with the utmost rigor.

7.1.11.3 THE ARUSHA PEACE PROCESS IN THE LIGHT OF THE RWANDAN BLOCKADE AND STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT (SPRING 1993-EARLY 1994)

The “blank checks”⁵⁰⁷ of Arusha

The signing of the Arusha Agreement on 4 August, 1993, marked the end of a negotiation process between the RPF and the Rwandan government that had begun in the spring of 1991. While the agreement was welcomed with relief, particularly in Paris, it should be noted that the agreement was not read in a univocal manner. Thus, we note the diplomatic telegram from Jean-Michel Marlaud, the French ambassador in Kigali, who was skeptical about the consequences of this agreement, particularly at the economic and social level:

Although the refugee issue is in principle the cause of the war, the negotiation of the protocol was not the most difficult, its application, on the other hand, is likely to give rise to multiple conflicts. The number of refugees potentially affected by the agreement is difficult to estimate. The UNHCR estimates the number of people potentially affected at 5 or 600,000, but the RPF speaks of one million and will no doubt try to obtain a maximum figure for electoral purposes.⁵⁰⁸

To summarize his thinking on the issue of refugee return and the future consequences that may follow, he strongly states: “The signatories of the agreement multiplied the blank checks: temporary housing centers, medical assistance, schooling aid, construction materials, agricultural tools, basic necessities and a small amount of money given to the refugees”⁵⁰⁹ and indicates that the donors were not consulted. The following month, he put a figure on the “cost of demobilization, which is estimated at \$32 million for demobilization bonuses alone,” and also stated that “no one knows today the amount of military debts that have been incurred, both by the Rwandan government and by the RPF, and that will have to be paid.”⁵¹⁰ To this demobilization plan, it will be necessary to add the reform of the civil service and the privatizations demanded in the framework of structural adjustment, “in particular that of Electrogaz (1,400 redundancies out of 2,700 employees).”⁵¹¹ Finally, he notes that “municipal employees have not been paid for several months.”

Warnings about the increasingly serious deterioration of the economic, financial and social situation in Rwanda

Ambassador Marlaud constantly alerts his administration to the continuous deterioration of the economic, financial and social situation in Rwanda. At the beginning of June 1993, he emphasized how the cessation of Canadian cooperation, for a total of US\$21.2 million in net payments, i.e. “10% of bilateral aid and 6% of total aid” [...], officially “taken for purely economic reasons,” was going to handicap the country.⁵¹² The Canadian Prime Minister’s refusal to François Mitterrand’s request for aid for “war displaced persons in Rwanda”⁵¹³ is clear. The reference to this document has already been mentioned (see above). It is also important to quote his assessment of the general situation in the country:

*My government is sensitive to the suffering of these unfortunate victims. It considers that the country is sliding dangerously towards political, economic and social disarticulation, to the point where the absence of conditions conducive to sustained development neutralizes the benefits of any investment aimed at the medium and long term.*⁵¹⁴

It is important to be clear about foreign aid and its impact. In August 1993, the French ambassador reported on the mission of

Mr. Trevor Page, an envoy of the executive director of the WFP (World Food Program) who stayed in Rwanda for two weeks. His mission was to verify information on “the worsening of malnutrition, despite the scale of the food aid” and to assess “the extent of diversions and see what measures could be taken to limit them.” On this second point, Mr. Page notes that it is “very severe: he estimates that they concern 30 to 50 percent of the aid delivered by the WFP, the total amount of which is estimated at \$70 million, paid mainly in 1993.” This aid is often resold by the beneficiaries in the camps or comes from “inflating the lists of beneficiaries.”⁵¹⁵ With less aid and too often pillaged, Rwanda is sinking into crisis.

At the end of August 1993, the balance sheet was catastrophic: “GDP per capita, which has been steadily declining over the past few years, is expected to fall further in 1993 and will not exceed \$153 (\$186 in 1992).”⁵¹⁶ GDP was estimated at \$250 per capita per year in 1990. The decline is therefore 38.8% since 1990. The Rwandan government was in dire straits: at the end of August 1993, the French ambassador noted that “foreign exchange reserves would not exceed [...] \$17 million, i.e. 2.8 weeks of imports.”⁵¹⁷ These reserves increased slightly: they were “less than one month’s imports”⁵¹⁸ on 6 October, 1993. On the same day, 6 October, 1993, Jean-Bernard Mérimée, from New York, reported on his meeting with President Habyarimana. The latter mentioned his wish to meet with Prime Minister Édouard Balladur “to discuss economic issues in particular.” We have no record of this meeting.⁵¹⁹ The joint mission of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which visited Rwanda from October 21 to November 4, emphasized the seriousness of the situation and noted that “Rwanda’s needs are immediate, while the negotiation of the structural adjustment program will take many more weeks, if not months.”⁵²⁰ Jean-Michel Marlaud pleaded for “donors to mobilize very quickly, without waiting for a formal agreement between the government and the Bretton-Woods institutions.” Jean-Michel Marlaud advocated community intervention, in particular the STABEX funds [Stabilization Fund for Export Earnings from Agricultural Products], which “are not linked to

the conclusion of an agreement with the Bretton Woods institutions,” as well as an awareness-raising campaign with our European partners.

Finally, on 13 December, 1993, Ambassador Marlaud signed a very alarmist telegram on the economic and social situation in the country and on his forecasts for 1994. He notes that the Prime Minister of Rwanda met on the same day with “donors and NGOs to make them aware of the seriousness of the food situation in Rwanda and to present them with a request for emergency aid.” J. M. Marlaud said that “in addition to the structural insufficiencies, aggravated by the war situation and the massive arrival of refugees from Burundi,” a new phenomenon is affecting Rwanda. The country is “currently affected by an unusual drought: rainfall in September and October was less than 50% of the 1958-1992 average in half the prefectures.” He emphasized a fact already mentioned at the end of 1990: “the almost total absence of foreign currency makes it almost impossible to resort to imports” and estimated the need for food aid.⁵²¹ France’s line is clear. There could be no French aid, apart from humanitarian aid, except in the framework of a structural adjustment agreement with the IMF and the World Bank. These institutions are calling for the implementation of the Arusha agreements and, in particular, the appointment of a Broad-Based Transitional Government (BBTG). The government of Edouard Balladur intends to rely on international institutions, the IMF and the World Bank, to carry out the structural adjustment of African countries and their modernization. It will not change. Together with the devaluation of the CFA franc by 50 percent on 11 January, 1994, this constitutes the two pillars of the “Balladur doctrine.”⁵²²

The actions of the Ministry of Cooperation and Development, the Central Fund for Economic Cooperation and the Ministry of Economy and Finance in its relations with Rwanda can be seen from three perspectives. First, the role of a number of senior officials in the Ministry of Cooperation and Development, the CCCE and the Ministry of Economy should be noted. In 1990 and in the following years, they perceived the major flaws in the cooperation system for African LDCs in particular, and the uses to which French public funds could be put, which were easily diverted to arms purchases in particular.⁵²³ There were

undoubtedly two currents in this group, a modernizing current that wished to rationalize cooperation around Jean-Michel Séverino and a current more concerned with controlling national public spending and the coherence of public policies within the EU, around Jean-Claude Trichet.

Second, in late 1990 and early 1991, the Ministry of Cooperation and Development, the CCCE and the Ministry of Economy and Finance had extremely powerful leverage over Rwanda. The decision to provide financial assistance to Habyarimana is eminently political. It twists the arm of these three institutions. Another interpretation would be that this aid was “compensation” for Habyarimana’s efforts to reach an agreement with his regional partners in February 1991 in Dar-es-Salam on the refugee issue and to sign the N’Sele ceasefire at the end of March 1991. This hypothesis is also plausible.

Finally, there is a normalization or alignment of France with the position of the IMF and the World Bank. The situation changed profoundly between April 1991, when France bailed out Rwanda’s balance of payments, and January 1993, when Jean-Claude Trichet expressed deep disagreement with any aid outside of structural adjustment with the agreement of international institutions. A double balance was altered. First, at the internal level, the role of the three institutions - and perhaps fundamentally of the Treasury Department - is no longer marginal in the French game but becomes key. Second, this rise of the Treasury Department is based on a new international configuration. The “realistic” economic turn towards Africa of the Mitterrand presidency delayed the turn towards domestic austerity by about ten years. This approach, which relies on the IMF and the World Bank, is two-faced. By focusing on conditionality and the institutionalist approach - the establishment of the BBTG and the adoption of a structural adjustment plan - the three institutions studied and the international institutions, the IMF and the World Bank, attempted a bold gamble: to make Habyarimana bend to hasten a peace solution. On the contrary, there was the decay of the Rwandan State - which was already well underway - and the considerable impoverishment of Rwandan society. The shortcomings of Arusha, the “blank checks”

to use Ambassador Marlaud's expression, became extremely obvious in early 1994. The question of the demobilization or dismissal of part of the Rwandan army and the RPF army before the merger remained unresolved, without funding. This issue is an extremely powerful destabilizing factor for one of the few organized bodies in the State, whose specificity is the control of arms.

7.1.12 Elements Of Judicial Action

The archives for the documentation and patrimony of the justice system made available to the mission's researchers are established by the *Direction des Affaires criminelles et des Grâces* (DACG, Department of Criminal Affairs and Pardons).⁵²⁴ They show us that the various ministers who succeeded one another all followed with great interest the judicial cases related to the events in Rwanda in 1994.

7.1.12.1 A RAPE THAT WAS RECORDED BUT NOT PROSECUTED

On 3 March, 1993, men of the 21st RIMA, present in Rwanda as part of Operation *Noroît*, gang-raped a young Rwandan woman in Kigali on board a military truck. The circumstances of the crime were particularly atrocious, according to a 20 March, 1998 report. The French gendarmes (provost marshals) immediately went to the scene, arrested the alleged perpetrators, and the military authority requested that they be prosecuted before the competent court of first instance. The procedure was unsuccessful. But the military institution did not hush up this case of rape. The archives of the French provost marshals in Kigali⁵²⁵ show their investigation without all the circumstances having been retraced. They are re-established in the report of 20 March, 1998.⁵²⁶

The case of the gang rape of 3 March, 1993, refers to the presence and activity of the provost marshals in Rwanda, these gendarmes who are officers of the judicial police deployed with the units. The provost's archives show the details of the activities of these gendarmes. Some offenses - in the judicial sense - could escape them. Given the gendarmes' dedication to recording facts - such as the many traffic accidents involving French military personnel - it is difficult to imagine that they would have decided on their own initiative to overlook another crime of rape. They could have been dissuaded by their superiors. This type

of intervention generally leaves archival traces, which are kept by the persons concerned in order to protect themselves.

The provost marshal's records accessed by the Commission only document this one case of rape. The civilian and military leaders of the democratic nations are aware of the reality of these acts within their units,⁵²⁷ and of their increased probability in a context of absence of combat and close proximity to the population. It should be noted that Colonel Patrice Sartre, in his end-of-mission report⁵²⁸ as head of the Northern Group of Operation Turquoise, insists on the importance of gendarmerie officers at his side. This was particularly true in situations where the law, from that time on, retains the qualification of criminal. The testimony of the victims must therefore be recorded.

7.1.12.2 THE MURDER OF THE TWO GENDARMES ALAIN DIDOT (AND HIS WIFE GILDA) AND RENÉ MAIER

On 26 June, the Paris Public Prosecutor's Office was contacted regarding the disappearance on 8 April, 1994 in Kigali of Chief Warrant Officers René Maier and Alain Didot, and Didot's wife, née Gilda Lana. At the end of July, the Paris public prosecutor drew up a report for the Attorney General of the Paris Court of Appeal. An investigation was initiated by the senior gendarmerie officer in charge of terrorism issues. In his report, the public prosecutor stated: "The file dated 22 July, 1994 deserves attention."⁵²⁹

The subject of this file is the disappearance of two gendarmerie non-commissioned officers and the wife of one of them on 8 April. The investigation established that five non-commissioned officers and four gendarmerie officers were participating in technical military assistance missions with the Rwandan gendarmerie. They were in an area where fighting was taking place, and it was during this time that Chief Warrant Officer Alain Didot and his wife, as well as Chief Warrant Officer René Maier, were reported missing. The bodies were not found until 12 April in the courtyard of the Didot couple's home. But the gendarmerie officers present in

Kigali collected very contradictory information from witnesses, contradictions that did not escape the Paris prosecutor. Testimonies from Rwandan refugees provided details on the date and time of death of Chief Warrant Officer Didot and his wife, who were shot dead on 8 April at around 4:00 p.m. However, “the perpetrators cannot be identified” (underlined in the text). Five other witnesses, “according to concordant information,” the investigator specifies, indicated that they were taking refuge in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Didot “when RPF soldiers entered, brought them out and shot the Didots.” As for a German national (head of the German assistance), he was informed by the Didots’ neighbor of the same facts, but he did not see the assailants and attributed the murder to Rwandan soldiers in reprisal for the protection given to Tutsi. This version “seems incompatible with the fact that the five Rwandans were able to get out of the Didot home and reach Le Méridien. The situation on the ground did not allow for any verification (underlined in the text).”⁵³⁰

The Paris prosecutor therefore expressed doubts about the veracity of these contradictory testimonies and underlined this in his report. But another document, dated 9 April, 1994, interfered and produced the testimony of Admiral Lanxade, who stated that

A French non-commissioned officer and his wife were most probably killed by men of the Rwandan Patriotic Front... There is also no news of a third military aid worker in Kigali, he adds. Hutu elements (the majority ethnic group) had taken refuge in their homes. People from the RPF came and it was on this occasion that they were most probably killed, he said. Admiral Lanxade also said that a French priest was murdered Wednesday night in northern Rwanda by RPF forces. The chief of staff of the French army said Saturday that he had information that troops of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF, the armed rebellion of the Tutsi minority) were moving toward the capital Kigali. This has led to a withdrawal of our cooperants located in the north of the country, added the Chief of Staff during a press briefing to explain the French operation in Rwanda, called Amaryllis. After a calm night, the situation has deteriorated, there is shooting in the city and people are not getting around properly, said Admiral Lanxade, pointing out that the arrival of French soldiers last night in Kigali was an operation designed exclusively to allow the departure of French nationals.⁵³¹ The French government is not responsible for the situation.

For him, the guilty party can only “very probably” be

the RPF, which was also responsible for the assassination of a French priest. Moreover, according to information that he considers credible, RPF troops are moving towards Kigali. Everything seems to fit. This justifies the decision to evacuate the nationals through Operation Amaryllis.

There are also gray areas in this case. On 21 July, the head of the public action bureau, general affairs of the DACG, in a message whose subject was the voluntary homicide in Rwanda of Chief Warrant Officers Didot and Maier, and of three airplane pilots, was perplexed because he reported that the Paris prosecutor “had not found a complaint concerning Messrs Didot and Meier, and the senior investigating judge had not informed him of the receipt of the complaint relating to facts concerning airplane pilots...” The procedure was therefore initiated and was only finally discovered by the Paris Public Prosecutor’s Office thanks to the constitution of a civil party, where the author of the message emphasizes “I faxed [this constitution of a civil party] this afternoon of crimes against humanity for acts committed in Rwanda.”⁵³²

7.1.12.3 THE ATTACK OF 6 APRIL 1994 IN THE ARCHIVES OF THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

The first measures consisted of bringing the legislation into line with Resolution 955 passed on 8 November, 1994 by the Security Council for the creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). The legislation was then amended to allow for the implementation of universal jurisdiction and the arrest in France of alleged genocidaires. The question of the jurisdiction of the French courts, the court that could be seized, and the qualification of the facts, took time. As a result, some complaints filed before the legislation came into effect were left with no response. The first complaints concerned acts of “terrorism.”

On 28 June, 1994, Alain Marsaud, a deputy for the Haute Vienne (a former magistrate in the anti-terrorist section in Paris) issued a press release in which he asked that an investigation be carried out in order to identify and bring those responsible for the attack on the plane of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi on 6 April 1994 before the French courts, and above all, that the truth, whatever it may be, not be concealed.⁵³³

On 1 July the Security Council created a commission of investigation into the acts of genocide committed in Rwanda. The concern was to avoid a new, cumbersome, and costly structure “for results which, with time and the evolution of things, will prove slow and uncertain.”⁵³⁴ On 11 July, 1994, a memo from the mission to combat terrorism was sent to the chargé de mission of the Minister of Justice. It concerned the assassination of French nationals in Rwanda and Algeria. The common point between these two countries, whose history does not allow for any comparison, is the qualification chosen.

*The characterization of the circumstance of terrorism would require a special discussion because of the symbolism inherent in this technical choice, which must be taken into account in view of the probable evolutions of the political situation of this country.*⁵³⁵

From the point of view of the author of this memo, the case of the French nationals assassinated during the attack in Rwanda on 6 April must be “harmonized” with the investigation of several French nationals assassinated in Algeria. It was not until 9 December, 1997, that a first complaint was filed by Sylvie Minaberry, the daughter of one of the pilots of the presidential plane, with a civil action for “murder and destruction of property by explosive substance resulting in the death of one or more persons, complicity.” A memo from the DACG to the office of the Minister of Justice informs her of the major problems with this complaint related to both the jurisdiction of the court and the qualification requested.

The jurisdiction of the French court is legally established, but the place of jurisdiction, Paris or Brest, will depend on the qualification chosen. However, the main problem concerns the qualification of act of terrorism attached to the facts denounced by the plaintiff. Indeed, the explosion or destruction in flight of an aircraft resulting in the death of foreign heads of State in a context of general insecurity and serious internal political unrest affecting their countries does not obviously qualify as an act of terrorism:

In fact, the death or physical elimination of people abroad in the context of power struggles or territorial or ethno-political confrontations of a military nature (coup d'état, military putsch, civil wars, local or regional conflicts, inter-ethnic massacres, etc.) cannot, at the risk of

*establishing de facto universal jurisdiction for the benefit of the specialized Parisian jurisdiction, automatically be linked to the notion of terrorist enterprise, understood by French legislators and practitioners as covering individual or collective practices aimed at terrorizing and intimidating innocent populations for political purposes.*⁵³⁶

In conclusion of this initial analysis for the purpose of understanding the government of the State in the Rwandan crisis, the examination of the institutions in charge or in charge of policies shows first of all the place and importance that Rwanda occupies in their functioning. Beyond the Élysée and the system of power represented by the Presidency of the Republic, not only the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces Staff, numerous military units, the Directorate of Military Intelligence, the General Directorate of External Security, but also the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Cooperation, as well as the Ministry of the Economy, the Ministry of the Budget, and the Central Fund for Economic Cooperation are mobilized. This mobilization is long-term; the resources are considerable; the involvement of French civil servants and military personnel is immense. Thus, if the military dimension is major in France's action in Rwanda, French policy cannot be reduced to what has been seen as an "adventure" in Rwanda but must, on the contrary, be seen as a global policy. The path that led to such a deployment can only be explained by the initial presence of a powerful political will that can only be that of the head of state himself, François Mitterrand. The reasons that animate this will are multiple, they are as much due to global geopolitical conceptions as to an imaginary Rwanda populated by peasants under the threat of a royalist restoration by an aristocratic and warlike class, as to a personal, privileged relationship with the Rwandan President-General, Juvénal Habyarimana.

Secondly, an examination of these institutions and their functioning reveals, through a critical reading of the archives produced, a pronounced cleavage between those who apply themselves to act in accordance with public practices, and those who disregard the norms and impose power relationships to the point of creating a derogation system. This irregular functioning of institutions crosses the line

that would separate them from the law and the constitution. These deviations from the norm would perhaps be justified if the vital interests of France were in question. Is this the case for Rwanda?

The third conclusion invites us to note the weakness of the checks and balances in France in the context of a case like Rwanda. Thus, Parliament plays a reduced role, and ministers rarely express a dissonant voice. Although from 1993 onwards, certain financial administrations tended to distance themselves, it was really necessary to wait for the cohabitation of April 1993 and the emergence, due to the strict application of the Constitution, of a powerful interlocutor opposite the President of the Republic to determine and conduct the nation's policy. The weakness of the checks and balances is also linked to a form of intellectual bankruptcy of the administrative and political elites in their efforts to define a French strategy in Rwanda. This failure has several causes: the organization of the administrations, the difficulty of bringing out discordant opinions without risk to those who would hold them, the general gravity of representations concerning this region of Africa and the issues that are specific to it, but also global preconceptions concerning African countries, the weight of ethnological or political considerations.

7.2 INSTITUTIONS IN THE LIGHT OF A CONTEMPORARY BODY OF INTERNAL ANALYSIS AND FEEDBACK

The work of the Research Commission in numerous archive centers, including the three main ones in Pierrefitte (National Archives), Vincennes (Service historique de la Défense) and La Courneuve (Diplomatic Archives), made it possible to identify and gather a corpus of analyses produced by administrative institutions – for execution as well as foresight and advice. Although they come from different bodies in terms of their functions, their missions and their place in the State, and although they have different forms and statuses, these analyses form a coherent corpus insofar as their authors apply themselves to thinking about events and policies in terms of their duration, their objectives and also their results. They are not one-off memos on a specific subject or orientation, but rather a freer and sometimes

personal exercise in reflection to guide future action. The functional analyses produced by the implementing institutions rarely have a vocation for critical reflection.

This corpus of critical reflection has endeavored to be exhaustive, based on the research carried out in the public archives. Some of the analyses have already been mentioned or analyzed in previous chapters. However, we will repeat them in order to conduct the “analysis of the analysis” as closely as possible. Internal to the institutions, these documents are communicated to higher levels and sometimes reach the level of ministerial cabinets, very rarely that of the presidency of the Republic. It is rare, as far as the cabinets are concerned, that such thought exercises, which are unequal in their approach - or belong to it when researchers are seconded within the institutions - are encouraged. On the contrary, these analyses are often opposed, particularly on the subject of French involvement in Rwanda, where doubts must not be allowed, where the grids presiding over action are intended to be rigid, even dogmatic, as we have seen. The third part of the chapter shows this frequent rejection of distanced reflection, held to be dissident, while the careers of their authors may bear the stigma.

Some of these internal analyses were able to leave the administrative sphere and are now known to the public, such as the memo produced by the *Délégation aux affaires stratégiques* in April 1993, “Plea for a re-examination of French policy in Rwanda.” Others were commented on within the civilian and military administrations before reflection on Rwanda and the Tutsi genocide became impossible within the State, taking into account the opinions held against the institutions and the legal proceedings against some of their officials. At that time, it was necessary to offer a united front in the face of the attacks and to put aside any work on the truth that presented a tactical risk. Isolated from each other, these memos, files and reflections have only a relative scope and can be reduced to the sole thought of their author, who was then marginalized. Gathered within the framework of such a corpus, they reveal convergences, they demonstrate the existence of a divergent thought but incapable of acting on the decisions because of its isolation and its fragmentation.

7.2.1 *Analysis of the period October 1990-March 1994*

7.2.1.1 GENERAL SCHMITT'S MEMOS TO THE ARMY STAFF

Without making any connection between the political and social analyses contained in the report and the actions of the Army Staff, it should be noted that at the end of November, when half of *Noroît* had already been repatriated, the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Schmitt, wrote a memo to the office of the Minister of Defense making observations and formulating a request:

As calm is returning to Rwanda, it is permissible to consider, as of now, the withdrawal of the Guépard detachment that is there. Consequently, I have the honor to ask you to authorize me to transfer the elements present in Rwanda from Kigali to Bangui. This solution would make it possible to avoid having to call on new reinforcements from France in the event of a deterioration of the situation in the Central African capital.⁵³⁷

This memo from the Chief of Army Staff to the Minister's office makes it possible to place the military engagement in Rwanda in the context of the French Army. Thus, at the end of November 1990, it no longer seemed appropriate to maintain French forces that were deemed necessary elsewhere. This memo therefore sheds light on a French but purely military reading of the Rwandan situation. At the beginning of 1991, the analytical efforts of the various ministries in France contributed to the emergence of a clear position, not so much on France's action in Rwanda in general, as on the need to maintain a substantial military presence in Rwanda. These analyses also allow for the emergence of points of divergence within the decision-making bodies.

Thus, "the French ministries" (Defense and Foreign Affairs or Cooperation) are considering withdrawing the special forces company that intervened in October. Its deployment was intended for emergency situations and this was no longer the case, as Colonel Thomann explained in his report of 9 November 1990. This position is clearly expressed in a new message to the Ministry of Defense dated 2 January 1991:

*Operation *Noroît*, which was launched at the beginning of October, was intended to protect our nationals and to guarantee their evacuation, if necessary.*

The return to calm in most of the country allowed, at the end of November, to proceed with a first relief of the operation. Since then,

despite the continuing clashes on the border between Rwanda and Uganda, calm has been restored inside the country and the safety of our nationals no longer seems to be threatened.

In addition, as of January, the reinforcement of the military cooperation mission will enable it to carry out the technical military assistance mission alone.

Under these conditions, the presence of our troops no longer seems essential to me, and I would like to see them return to France to reconstitute our intervention reserves, which have been greatly diminished by the recent reinforcement of the Daguet system.

This is why I have the honor of asking you to authorize the withdrawal of the remaining unit, approximately 160 men, and the dismantling of Operation Noroît. I would add that when Operation Noroît was launched, we set up a company from the Central African Republic in less than 24 hours. This possibility will remain.⁵³⁸

For the head of the army, in line with the memo he had written on 22 November 1990,⁵³⁹ the withdrawal of French forces from Rwanda was necessary not only because of the lack of interest for France in their presence there, but also because French strategic interests required that these forces, which constituted reserves in the context of France's commitment to Kuwait, be brought back to France. The general added, with the obvious aim of removing all obstacles, that a company was pre-positioned in the Central African Republic if it was necessary to evacuate French nationals in an emergency. Thus, the voice of the Army was clearly expressed on the Rwandan question in early 1991. The next day, reinforcing the request of the Chief of Army Staff, military intelligence pointed out that the reasons for the French military presence in Rwanda were at odds with the rhetoric concerning the protection of French nationals. The maintenance of French soldiers in the country was seen as responding more to a Rwandan request than to a French need:

Our intervention was based on the need to protect/evacuate our nationals (about 650 at the beginning). The latter were never directly threatened. About 150 of them returned to France despite everything. There are still about 500 left.

On 25 November, our contingent was reduced from two companies to one, which was also to return on 15 December. In fact, President Habyarimana considers that a European military presence is likely to provide him with stabilizing support. It is possible that this view is shared by several other heads of State in francophone Africa.⁵⁴⁰

As discussed in Chapter 2, the contrast between General Schmitt's memo

and that of Admiral Laxande on the same day is striking. Admiral Lanxade provides President Mitterrand with an update on the situation, mentioning the concern expressed by President Habyarimana about the prospect of withdrawal.⁵⁴¹ Handwritten on a memo from his Chief of Staff, the President of the Republic requested “the postponement of the departure of the Cie stationed in Kigali. At least one month.”⁵⁴² François Mitterrand dismissed the prudent advice of the Chief of Army Staff and the relative restraint of Admiral Lanxade. From a strictly military point of view, the President of the Republic’s decision appears to be well-founded in retrospect, since the Rwandan Patriotic Front launched a new attack on Rwanda on the following 23 January. This was the result of the struggle he had undertaken against the “Habyarimana dictatorship,” as he put it. It also stemmed from his reaction to the risks of anti-Tutsi massacres as they were perpetrated with great intensity in reprisal for the October 1990 offensive.

This episode mixing decision and reflection, leading to a form of separation between one and the other, resulting in a choice of lasting military engagement that immediate events appear to confirm, is decisive for grasping the issues of understanding reality and sharing analysis. These issues are major because they condition the possibility of acting by using reflection. However, the very nature of action in politics involves the need to decide, which imposes the discarding of analyses in favor of others. The Rwandan case illustrates a continuous situation where analyses deemed divergent are sacrificed in favor of convergent contents that are increasingly separated from a rational and informed examination of reality. The corpus of memos, files and reports that emerges from the consultation of public archives shows this intellectual weakening of political action. It also demonstrates the fate of this critical documentation, which is to have no power over the decision except to provoke aggravated forms of hardening among the decision-makers. At least it proves the maintenance of a critical thought within the State. To make it exist beyond the institutions which sheltered it was perhaps beyond the reach of their leaders. A regret for this other and impossible history can be expressed here.

7.2.1.2 AT THE SGDN. TWO MEMOS FROM OCTOBER 1990 AND SEPTEMBER 1993

On 26 October, 1990, the General Secretariat of National Defense (SGDN) issued a memo on “Rwanda: the limits of the

French engagement.”⁵⁴³ The author wrote: “Three weeks after the intervention in Rwanda of a French military unit of 300 men whose mission is strictly limited to the protection of our nationals, the situation on the ground remains confused and the future of President Juvénal Habyarimana’s regime uncertain.” He emphasized that France’s interests in Rwanda were “very limited” and that there were risks of “slipping or getting bogged down”⁵⁴⁴ in France’s involvement, the latter being developed in the body of the memo under the title: “the French intervention.”⁵⁴⁵ The presentation of the “political situation” in Rwanda insists on the possible opening that the President could practice “in the spirit of the recommendations of the La Baule summit,” but the redactor adds, he “hesitates mainly to settle in depth the problem of the Tutsi minority and the presence abroad of a very strong community of this ethnic group. Finally, in order to save his regime, he runs the risk of reviving the old rivalries by calling for a sort of ‘holy war’ against the Tutsi.”⁵⁴⁶

The analysis is made of a major risk for the Tutsi, which the redactor struggles to define but which he wants to conceive by using a very significant and worrying expression, which should resonate with his readers. The memos that accompany the text are equally explicit. The “Tutsi minority [...] is practically excluded from all positions of responsibility. Rwanda is one of the only countries in Africa where ethnicity is mentioned on identity documents.” The risk of a “holy war” against the Tutsi is made clear by the reference to the killings that immediately followed the RPF offensive of 1 October and the lie of the authorities about them:

*Several of them were allegedly massacred by the military in the first days of fighting. President Habyarimana, who did not dispute the facts, affirmed that they were “rebels” dressed in civilian clothes.*⁵⁴⁷

The analysis is relevant. On the one hand, the Rwandan Armed Forces, pushed back by the RPF offensive, expect a compensatory victory that they obtain in the mass slaughter of the internal enemy, easily identified by the ethnic name; on the other hand, this act of extermination is denied and the responsibility is rejected on the external enemy. If we add the incomprehension and passivity of the great power present

in Rwanda, we have here, described by the editor of the SGDN, the beginning of a genocidal process.

The memo is particularly incisive since it puts quotation marks around the formula of armed intervention, “on a humanitarian basis”⁵⁴⁸ while the chronology explains that the “objective of the RPF is to establish a government of national unity comprising both Tutsi and Hutu.”⁵⁴⁹ Finally, it indicates the promises of liberalization made by the regime after the thousands of opponents and Tutsi arrested, some of whom were grouped together in a stadium: among these people, “women and children are to be noted.”⁵⁵⁰ This analysis was transmitted in particular to the Presidency of the Republic, “3 copies, including 1 for Mr. Ménage, head of the cabinet” at the EMP⁵⁵¹ and “1 copy for Mr. Arnaud,” diplomatic advisor.

The Élysée was thus informed of an analysis critical of the support for a country that, as soon as it received military aid, set about massacring the Tutsi minority and repressing the political opposition. The chronology ends with a mention of François Mitterrand’s reception of President Habyarimana at the Élysée on 18 October, 1990. Implicit in the memo is the glaring imbalance of power that prevents France from being able to make real demands of the regime. The disappearance of Jean-Christophe Mitterrand’s archives and the incomplete nature of those of the EMP make it impossible to know the reaction of the Élysée to this divergent thinking, which, unfortunately, the future will prove to be correct.

Is there a causal link? In any case, no other memo from the SGDN was identified until the end of 1993 in the archives of the service, which were poorly preserved at the time.⁵⁵² At that moment, a study on the “Sub-region of the Great Lakes of Africa: decisive developments for the regional balance”⁵⁵³ was circulated. It was undated, but in any case it came after the signing of the Arusha Agreements of 4 August, 1993, since it mentioned them. It emphasizes the risk of aggravation “by the combination of national tensions, which are always possible, and an extension of ethnic violence in the Zairian province of Kivu. Given the strength of the ethnic reflex specific to this region, dramatic chain reactions cannot be excluded.”⁵⁵⁴ It lists a series of recommendations for France.⁵⁵⁵

On 27 September, 1993, a new study came out of the Hôtel des Invalides

where the SGDN was based. Entitled “*Update on armed struggle movements in central and eastern Africa*,”⁵⁵⁶ it analyzed “the Tutsi rebellion,”⁵⁵⁷ specifying, however, that “the RPF officially refuses to present itself as the politico-military emanation of the Tutsi minority. In order to appear multi-ethnic, it has taken care to broaden its group of ‘historical’ leaders by placing in certain important positions Hutu personalities who are fiercely opposed to President Habyarimana for personal or ethnic reasons.”⁵⁵⁸ The writer doubts this political identity of the RPF, which he presents as a cover, in the same way that he makes the movement, because of its presence in Uganda, “a sort of ‘clone’ of the NRA”⁵⁵⁹ and details “the objectives pursued by the RPF [which] are aimed at overthrowing the regime of President Juvénal Habyarimana and conquering power in Kigali.” To achieve these goals, the editor adds, the RPF has implemented a global strategy, which can be analyzed on a fivefold level.⁵⁶⁰

The SGDN points out the accentuated radicalization of the “Hutu extremists” by describing precisely their places of power and their evolution towards “armed struggle” through the strengthening of “extremist Hutu militias.” It insists on the RPF’s current capacity to “carry out a variety of operations since the end of 1990” thanks to a “relatively powerful military tool,” i.e., “large-scale offensives,” “guerrilla activities,” “acts of terrorism” and “ethnic massacres.” The memo does not draw conclusions on the future of Rwanda, merely pointing out the radicalization of Hutu extremists and the risk that they will move on to armed struggle against the Tutsi enemy with the identification of targets.⁵⁶¹ Another risk is noted, one that carries a different but real radicalization, if the RPF is led to “lose the ‘peace’ in the coming months.”⁵⁶²

The interest of the memo is to place the very worrying evolution of Rwanda in the context of the risks of internal explosion in Central and East African countries, where “democratic enthusiasm” is coming up against the “resurgence of ethnic antagonisms” from three angles: “the ‘ethnicization’ of the political landscape,” “the persistence of secular divisions,” and “the politics of the worst” integrating “real policies of planned terror” that result in the “eradication of certain ethnic groups,” as in Burundi for the Hutu or in Rwanda for the Tutsi.⁵⁶³

7.2.1.3 AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. TWO MEMOS FROM 1990 AND 1992 BY JEAN-FRANÇOIS LEGUIL-BAYART

The Centre d'analyse et de prévision [Center for Analysis and Forecasting] (CAP) was created in 1974 by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Michel Jobert, who wanted an organization intended to provide critical reflection on France's foreign policy, and to carry out "forecasting studies" over the medium and long term. This center was directly attached to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, but it was marginalized when Roland Dumas was at the Quai d'Orsay. Its members were career diplomats, senior civil servants and researchers, both permanent and consultants. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, a magistrate at the *Cour des Comptes* (Court of Auditors), was a member from 1979 to 1981 before becoming its head from 1989 to 1993. He was succeeded by Bruno Racine, himself a member of the *Cour des Comptes*. Jean-François Leguil-Bayart, an Africanist academic, became a permanent consultant in 1990. In this capacity, he wrote several memos on Rwanda and Africa.

In October 1990, as a consultant to CAP, Jean-François Leguil-Bayart submitted a memo on "the dangers of the 'Rwandan detonator'"⁵⁶⁴ to its director, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, who sent it to the director of the cabinet of the Minister of Defense, François Nicoullaud, on 3 January, 1992.⁵⁶⁵ It offers a reflection on France's policy in the region. According to Jean-François Bayart, the RPF attack marked "the installation of Rwanda in a situation of lasting war" for three reasons: Habyarimana's regime was at the end of its tether; social polarization was not limited to an ethnic crisis; and the risks of regional destabilization were great. The analyst proposes to put an end to the French presence, which is seen as a guarantee for this regime.

- The regime's loss of steam is explained by the fact that the President is unable to pursue a policy of openness and favors, instead, an authoritarian policy with a single party, in defiance of the La Baule principles. But he is facing growing opposition, including from the Hutu.

- For the author, the ethnic connotation of the 1959 revolution, which gave power to the Hutu, was not enough to justify the opposition; the social polarization and the economic and social dimension of the crisis had to be taken into account, especially since the regime refused to allow the return of Tutsi exiles, using the pretext of overpopulation and the economic crisis. On

the other hand, the RPF defends a progressive program while relying on monarchist history and culture (cf. the term *Inkotanyi*, “those who fight with the most courage,” defines RPF fighters and refers to a state of mind close to obscurantism, according to the analyst). These monarchical references justify the mistrust of Hutu in RPF-controlled areas, and those who support the RPF, such as Pasteur Bizimungu or Alex Kanyarengwe, are not a reliable guarantee. The RPF leader Fred Rwigyema, who launched the 1 October offensive, is marked by his history as a Tutsi exiled with his parents since 1960. He is presented as the leader of a counter-revolution with “the first consequence being the unleashing of a white terror.”⁵⁶⁶ Thus the RPF offensive is at once ethnic, political and social.

- Finally, the regional environment has to be taken into account because of migration flows and diplomatic rivalries between States. Museveni could not have been unaware of the RPF offensive (Fred Rwigyema held an important position within the NRA). And the Ugandan president has an interest in this: he supports the RPF in an attempt to defuse social tensions between indigenous Ugandans and Rwandans, because the former fear a change in the ethnic balance to the benefit of the Rwandan Tutsi; he wants to distance the army cadres who commit abuses. The success of the offensive could enable him to extend his influence in Rwanda if power passes to the RPF, whose program is close to that of the NRA. In Burundi, relations with Kigali are marked by suspicion, but Tutsi exiles have some influence in the administration and the army and have the means to support the RPF. But President Buyoya fears that events will undermine his policy of conciliation, so he is not very supportive. Tanzania is very involved because it hosts many Tutsi refugees from Rwanda and Hutu refugees from Burundi, some of whom are very active against Burundi. Kenya is home to Tutsi and the king whom the RPF’s monarchists follow, but it is opposed to Uganda and will not accept a movement close to Museveni’s NRA. In Zaire, Mobutu feels that his regional leadership is being challenged by Museveni, and he is worried because much of the conflict is in the Kivu region. In addition, he may be tempted to show himself as an obligatory (but weak) partner of the West. It is

therefore, essential to consider the impact in the region.

Because of these three factors and their connection, Jean-François Bayart presents several outcomes. He considers a negotiated settlement unlikely, because the basis is flawed in its formulation: “the terms of the current discussions are rigged.” The government in Kigali may fall and be replaced either by another in which Hutu interests would be better represented, or by the RPF, which the researcher considers “more serious but nevertheless plausible” insofar as it has military experience with Museveni; the war situation may persist in the Rwanda-Uganda-Tanzania borders; the risk of a weakening of the Ugandan president cannot be ruled out; and finally, the deterioration of the economy and of the health situation, which is already marked by AIDS, will increase.

The Franco-Belgian intervention prevented the RPF from taking power, which avoided “terrible massacres” and limited the repression carried out by the Habyarimana regime. At the same time, France, through its ambassador in Kampala, has engaged with the RPF on the sole issue of expatriates. This could be seen as beneficial, but the situation is increasingly uncomfortable as the war continues. Jean-François Bayart is therefore urging France to withdraw, because its military presence is seen as condoning the arrests, executions and massacres of which the RPF, the Rwandan Tutsi and the moderate Hutu are victims. On the military level, it risks coming up against experienced troops trained by the NRA. Regionally, it will alienate Tanzania, which will accuse it of neo-colonialism, and Burundi, which is sympathetic to the RPF, and Mobutu will use the French umbrella for personal political purposes.

When the expatriates are evacuated, France will have no reason to intervene except to accompany the departure of Habyarimana and the installation of a regime that would be ready to negotiate with the RPF (which will not be easy). Moreover, because of the size of the military resources committed to the Gulf War, it will be difficult to commit new ones to secure French expatriates in other countries on the verge of explosion, such as the Central African Republic, Togo, Niger, Mali, and even the Ivory Coast.

In January 1992, Jean-François Bayart wrote a memo on France's "three traps" in Africa.⁵⁶⁷ This memo concerns the whole of sub-Saharan Africa and the traps in which France risks being caught: the trap of structural adjustment, the trap of democracy and the trap of war. This memo was sent by Jean-Marie Guéhenno, the head of the CAP, to François Nicoullaud, director of cabinet for the Minister of Defense, Pierre Joxe.

The IMF and the World Bank decided to implement a policy of structural adjustment in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s. France played a mediating role between these States and the Bretton Woods institutions, but had no alternative strategy, as it had neither the financial means nor the political will to change its development aid policy. And "France continues to support a strategy that looks more and more like a real headlong rush,"⁵⁶⁸ with "a risk of a boomerang effect."⁵⁶⁹ Indeed, according to Jean-François Bayart, aid and dependence can be perceived as a recolonization that does not say its name and could lead to an anti-capitalist awakening, a social explosion, the destruction of State services, which would be accompanied by the confiscation of resources, conflicts, migrations and a health catastrophe.

The trap of democracy is to be taken seriously. The analyst notes that some countries are asking for more democracy, while France has "fostered" for a long time the "rentier and predatory authoritarianisms,"⁵⁷⁰ marked by a "certain candor of soul," it does not take the measure of the risks of restoring authoritarian regimes with recourse to the plundering of resources, to the manipulation of the multiparty system, and Jean-François Bayart notes that France has not known how to anticipate, dissuade, or punish. "It was able to give the impression that it could live with the perpetuation of the restoration of authoritarianism as long as certain appearances were safeguarded."⁵⁷¹ France was "caught in the trap of its own discourse on the need for democratization."⁵⁷² Based on a few examples, Zaire or Togo or in the Central African Republic, Jean-François Bayart notes that there is no coherence between France's doctrine and the reality of its interventions, and if the democratic demands are not xenophobic, they can become so.

“Contrary to popular belief, the sinews of political life south of the Sahara are not so much ethnic as factional struggles;”⁵⁷³ as in Angola, Mozambique, Uganda or Chad in particular, leaders act on their own behalf and in competition with each other at the risk of civil war. Thus the trap of war is not to be overlooked. The causes are multiple, they can be linked to the deterioration of the economy or to the delegitimization of one-party countries. France is involved in most of these hotbeds of tension, either openly (as in Chad or Rwanda⁵⁷⁴) or potentially (in Liberia or Niger, for example). These engagements will inevitably have a financial, diplomatic and even human cost that is disproportionate to the stakes. In Rwanda, “our military engagement is the last bastion of a regime that is at the end of its rope, that is far from enjoying the support of the Hutu majority, and whose capacity for recovery is most uncertain. It is alienating K ampala and makes it difficult to justify our refusal to intervene in Togo, as well as our withdrawal from Zaire.”⁵⁷⁵ The conflicts in the Great Lakes region, marked by thirty years of massacres, “plagued by inter-ethnic fantasies” and significant demographic pressure, must be resolved in the long term.

France’s mistake is not to have expanded beyond its own preserve, even if it were with other partners. However, maintaining a traditional policy is too costly in financial and human terms (diplomats and soldiers), and complete disengagement is unrealistic.⁵⁷⁶ Thus, the only realistic policy is to concentrate African policy on a few points, and to limit political and military interventions elsewhere, with interventions confined to the training of cadres; the French presence would be exercised through private humanitarian aid and businesses. This leads to the idea of eliminating the notion of “field” of the Ministry of Cooperation in favor of strengthening NGOs and university cooperation.

The analysis seems iconoclastic in that it profoundly questions France’s African policy and its involvement. Jean-Fran ois Bayart gives a much broader vision of the situation in Africa, far removed from ethnic conflicts, which he does not deny, but he sees them as the face of deep social crises led by declassed people, the *lumpen proletariat*.⁵⁷⁷ Well aware of the problematic situation in Rwanda,

he takes a pessimistic view of France's policy. It is difficult to know how this memo was received at the Ministry of Defense and the DAM. However, it is graded 12/20.⁵⁷⁸

7.2.1.4 TO THE DAM AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.
THE RWANDAN REDACTOR'S "PERSONAL MEMOS"

"Despite the pervasiveness of the Hutu-Tutsi antagonism and its deep-rootedness in the Rwandan collective consciousness, which makes any change of direction delicate, our action in this country deserves to be reoriented. The means at our disposal allow us to do so."⁵⁷⁹ So said Antoine Anfré in 1991, former number 2 at the Kampala post where Ambassador Gérard worked, who became "Rwanda redactor" at the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs during the time of Paul Dijoud, the Deputy Director for Central and Eastern Africa being Catherine Boivineau. The "two personal memos" he wrote at the invitation of the director of the Rwanda redactor in 1991, on 14 May⁵⁸⁰ and 17 July,⁵⁸¹ as well as a memo of 19 April signed by Jean Nave but in his hand⁵⁸² and a second memo, on "the internal politics of Rwanda,"⁵⁸³ dated 4 October, 1991, constitute a first-hand reflection that testifies to a methodical and informed analysis of the Rwandan situation. The analysis justifies alerting to the dangers of France's policy as it develops in almost exclusive favor of President Habyarimana's power.

Seven months after the beginning of the "October war," Antoine Anfré wrote his first "personal memo." In "Rwanda: The Political Impasse,"⁵⁸⁴ he begins by noting the surprise of European observers in the face of the RPF attack in October 1990, not only because of the attack itself, but also because they considered President Habyarimana a moderate. The latter became aware of the consequences of the "repeated refusal of the Kigali government to allow the return to the country of refugees whose membership in the Rwandan nation was denied"⁵⁸⁵ and of its inability to overcome ethnic divisions; hence the presence of at least 500,000 refugees in neighboring countries and 7 to 8,000 in the Ugandan army. The redactor emphasizes that this crisis is internal (the upper echelons of the administration, the army and public enterprises are controlled by Hutu from the regions where the president and his wife were born), and regional (large numbers of refugees in neighboring countries,

despised or envied depending on their situation). Juvenal Habyarimana refused to allow the Tutsi to return, even when they were persecuted. In Uganda, some support Museveni's guerrilla and his army, so "when President Habyarimana denounced the collusion between the Rwandan Patriotic Front and the ruling team in Kampala, he was probably not wrong,"⁵⁸⁶ but for Antoine Anfré, he was nevertheless wrong to have never sought a policy of reintegration of refugees, "not to mention the right of every individual to a citizenship and a homeland."⁵⁸⁷

He is under the influence of the Bashiru (Hutu from the northwest), such as Colonel Serubuga, who enjoy important privileges and powers, and he is in favor of clanism. But he is not unanimously supported by the population (Antoine Anfré points out the hostility of the followers of Grégoire Kayibanda, some Hutu have joined the RPF, including Pasteur Bizimungu and Colonel Kanyarengwe, who is its president). In Rwanda, "he is seen at best as a leader who has skillfully used his contacts in Europe, at worst as a servant of Belgium, the former colonial power, and of France."⁵⁸⁸ Finally, he is despised by his counterparts in the region, to whom he sometimes inspires more or less strong hostility. However, the president is skillful and does not lack assets: he has initiated a process of democratization that is attractive to the West, while his practice is marked by tribalism and the MRND risks leading exacerbated anti-Tutsi sentiment.

For Anfré, Habyarimana cannot overcome his problems without significant external support, particularly from France, both military and economic. "In the short and medium term, President Habyarimana's continued rule is likely to require a growing military commitment from France"⁵⁸⁹: he already benefits from the *Noroît* detachment, a DAMI in Ruhengeri, and a military advisor at his side. This aid will have to be accompanied by "prolonged economic assistance" so that the FAR can hold out against the RPF, which is waging a guerrilla war and enjoys the support of virtually the entire Tutsi diaspora.

As it stands, the situation is likely to have dramatic consequences in Rwanda and in the sub-region. Anfré suggests that France should promote an end to the conflict (for example, with a non-ethnic, but predominantly Hutu government) that would inspire

confidence and allow dialogue to begin, but he doubts that keeping President Habyarimana in place will help. For France, the diplomat concluded, “the time has perhaps come to take another path.”⁵⁹⁰

In a second “personal memo” given to Paul Dijoud on 17 July, 1991, on “France’s policy in Rwanda,”⁵⁹¹ Antoine Anfré returned to the idea already presented of a necessary change in France’s policy, which risked “entrenching” national and regional imbalances. Antoine Anfré recalls that France’s support was aimed at defending the territorial integrity of a friendly country through massive military and financial aid - with success, he considers, since the RPF’s advance has been slowed down. However, this policy had its limits and indirect effects, with the over-equipment of the Burundian army in response to that of the Rwandan army, leading to a situation of general over-
armament in the region with “a non-negligible potential risk of tension between the Hutu army of Rwanda and the Tutsi army of Burundi, both of which had been largely equipped with French equipment.”⁵⁹²

Antoine Anfré acknowledges that the French presence in Rwanda prevented human rights abuses. But the policy of supporting “a regime that is isolated on the regional level” puts France at risk of “cutting itself off from partners that are certainly not French-speaking (Uganda, Tanzania) but that have much greater potential than little Rwanda.”⁵⁹³ Antoine Anfré proposes solutions to ward off this risk of stalemate, including the promotion of a smooth transition involving President Habyarimana “being able to get rid of the most corrupt and unpopular members of his entourage (Colonels Serubuga, Rwagafilita, and Sagatwa...). In a second phase, he would have to agree to share his prerogatives.”⁵⁹⁴

To respond to the new risks, Antoine Anfré’s ideas are as follows: better consideration of ethnic, regional and also social balances; assistance in the formation of a government of national unity that would help restore confidence; control of the army, which should have a national component and no longer be solely Hutu; use of OAU mediation to promote

a regional treatment initiated with the Gbadolite summit (26 October, 1990), the Dar-es-Salaam conference on refugees (19 February, 1991), and the signing of the N'Sele agreements (29 March, 1991). France enjoys great prestige, he insists. Thanks to its action and support, the Rwandan regime did not lose the war. This prestige assures France:

A determining potential influence (the numerous visits to Paris by President Habyarimana and his minister Bizimungu during the last months attest to this). Moreover, unlike Belgium, for which Rwanda has become an issue of domestic policy, our Rwandan policy does not suffer from any Franco-French constraint.⁵⁹⁵ Our room for maneuver is therefore very important and allows us to conduct an active and daring policy, while keeping in mind that in Rwanda as in Burundi, ethnic abuses are possible at any time.⁵⁹⁶

And he concludes: “our action in this country should be reoriented,”⁵⁹⁷ emphasizing that it is necessary and within reach: “the means at our disposal allow us to do so.”⁵⁹⁸

The destination of two “personal memos” beyond their first recipient, Paul Dijoud, is unknown. They can be compared to two other memos that Antoine Anfré wrote, this time for the sub-direction of Central and Eastern Africa. The first, dated 19 April, 1991, was endorsed by the incumbent, the diplomat Jean Naves. The reflection is interesting: while it states the existence of “three groups of populations [populating] Rwanda,” “today”, Antoine Anfré immediately adds, “they all have the same way of life. In fact, they are the same people, speaking the same Bantu language. The term used to characterize them is caste. A Hutu and a Tutsi can, moreover, belong to the same clan, that is to say, they will originally have a common ancestor.”⁵⁹⁹

The second memo, on “Rwanda’s internal policy,”⁶⁰⁰ dates from 4 October, 1991, when the diplomat Catherine Boivineau became deputy director at the DAM. It contains a clear-cut analysis of the responsibilities of the Habyarimana regime in the crisis that Rwanda has been experiencing since the RPF offensive. Antoine Anfré calls for an in-depth understanding of this event, which is more revealing than triggering. After stating the existence of a consensus shared by “observers” who saw in the Rwandan president “a moderate African head of state

whose personality fortunately contrasted with that of some of his colleagues on the continent,” he exposes the deep reasons for the “aggression”⁶⁰¹ of 1 October which, according to him, was the result of the “slow maturation [...] of the destabilizing germs”:

The Kigali government’s repeated refusal to allow the return to the country of refugees whose membership in the Rwandan nation was denied, and its inability to conceive in time a policy likely to overcome ethnic cleavages contributed to the formation of an abscess at the country’s margins. This abscess, consisting of at least 600,000 refugees in neighboring countries and 7,000 to 8,000 banyarwanda (Rwandan Tutsi refugees) in the ranks of the Ugandan army, has finally burst, and the leaders in Kigali must face the most serious crisis Rwanda has experienced since independence.

Faced with the ethnic question, the image of a “moderate” head of state, putting an end to “the most blatant excesses of the Kayibanda regime” is being shattered, according to the diplomat who exposes President Habyarimana’s racist policies:

While persecutions against Tutsi who remained in the country ceased or almost ceased, the new leader did not question the confiscation of power by the Hutus. On the contrary, as the promoter of a “policy of ethnic and regional balance” based on a system of quotas, and therefore easy to manipulate, he [Habyarimana] fixed and even accentuated ethnic, clan and regional divisions. In addition to the divisions between Hutu and Tutsi, there were divisions between Bakiga (Hutu from the north) and Banyanduga (Hutu from the south), and within the Bakiga, between Bashiru (Hutu from Gisenyi and Rubengeri in the northwest) and Hutu from the northeast. The army, the senior administration and public enterprises are thus almost completely controlled by Hutus from the prefectures of Gisenyi (the president’s home region), Rubengeri (the home region of the president’s wife) and Byumba. The Tutsi, whether they are from the interior or refugees abroad, are no longer the only ones who feel marginalized.⁶⁰²

The Rwanda redactor is no less severe about the RPF’s strategy and hopes that “a way out of the crisis” will be found.

But, in addition to these questions, an essential question remains. Will the RPF agree to renounce armed struggle in order to place its action within the framework of openness and multi-party system defined by Kigali? So far, the answer has been no. The rebel organization believes that the forced march towards pluralism led by President HABYARIMANA is a trap that, by contributing to the formation of parties with an ethnic or regional base, will freeze the already existing system. However, while it is true that some people in the presidential entourage are maneuvering

*to maintain the status quo, it also appears that the head of State has, over the past few months, initiated a dynamic that could eventually lead to real changes, potentially allowing a way out of the crisis.*⁶⁰³

It is interesting to note that the passages relating to the “same Rwandan people,” Habyarimana’s racist policy and the “formation of an abscess at the country’s margins” are repeated in full in the “Statement of instructions for Jean-Michel Marlaud, French ambassador to Rwanda,”⁶⁰⁴ upon his departure for Kigali in May 1993. However, the lessons of Antoine Anfré’s analysis are not drawn, since one of the instructions given to the ambassador is to reflect on “the position that our country should adopt as well as its medium- and long-term interests at the end of the Rwandan crisis, knowing that we will be careful not to favor one or the other ethnic group.” The hypothesis of overcoming ethnic groups, which are both present in Rwanda and at the same time artificial and synonymous with divisions, is not put forward. In this regard, one might recall that Antoine Anfré, in the memo of 19 April, 1991, mentioned the efforts of President Buyoya and the Burundian government to “promote a policy of national reconciliation aimed at overcoming ethnic cleavages.”⁶⁰⁵

With a few exceptions that should be highlighted, the ethnicist reading of Rwanda is systematic in the analyses of the French authorities. In the absence of a historical and sociological approach to Rwanda, a part of the reality completely escapes France, precisely that which could allow for the articulation of another policy. This blindness also results from a more or less total alignment with the Habyarimana regime, whose power is defined by racist criteria. This reality is perceived by France, but it is accepted as a structural, definitive fact that must be dealt with, or even endorsed. While the political criterion is put forward by the RPF to define itself, it is rejected, and even fought, by French officials who try to confine the movement to an ethnicist and national framework of interpretation. This double denial of reality, combined with a lack of understanding of the reality of the high-intensity massacres committed against Rwandan Tutsi between 1990 and 1993, forms the basis of French State thinking on Rwanda. It places itself in a position of strength since it determines a strong engagement on the ground. There are only rare exceptions.

Those who challenged this doxa were excluded from decision-making and reflection positions, such as Antoine Anfré, who was forced to leave the DAM because of his rapid marginalization.

7.2.1.5 AT THE DAS IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE A “RWANDAN CRISIS” IN FRENCH THINKING?

From the spring of 1993, under the impetus of its first director, Jean-Claude Mallet, who was the main inspiration for its creation with Pierre Joxe, the *Délégation aux affaires stratégiques* (DAS) ramped up criticism of policy in Rwanda. However, although it was forceful and courageous, it did not succeed in alerting to the risks of genocide in Rwanda or in forcing those responsible for its policy to consider this new, radical fact.

On 10 April, 1993, Pierre Conesa signed a memo entitled, “Plaidoyer pour un réexamen de la politique française au Rwanda [Plea for a re-examination of French policy in Rwanda].”⁶⁰⁶ Distinguishing Rwanda from Uganda, which provides support to the RPF, and relying on a Kampala TD by Ambassador Gérard,⁶⁰⁷ he notes that the latter country is “a multi-ethnic State.”⁶⁰⁸ He defends the absence of “ethnic solidarity” between the Museveni regime and the RPF. He underlines the serious errors that France is making with regard to the RPF, in particular by refusing to talk with it “whereas Belgium does not have the same reticence,”⁶⁰⁹ and by holding it solely responsible for the breakdown of the cease-fire in February 1993. The DAS expert is particularly harsh on Kigali, bluntly criticizing French support for “a regime in place that is no more representative than the RPF.”⁶¹⁰ He rejects the ethnicist reading that associates the regime with the “majority people.” He proposes a political approach, noting that with the Arusha Accords, “France can distance itself” from “an internal crisis ‘African style’, i.e., an ethnically based revolt with a sanctuary in a border State, and benefiting from military aid (to be read perhaps as much in a system of gift and counter-gift as in that of international relations).”

The DAS memo cruelly reverses the vision of Rwanda as the centerpiece of the great international game that France, under the authority of the geopolitical vision of the head of state and his entourage, imagines controlling for its own benefit, at least in the Great

Lakes region. By reducing the French engagement to considerations of outdated African politics, Pierre Conesa disintegrates the “international reading” and reveals the limits, and even the traps, perceptible or not, into which France is drawn. France’s lack of understanding of the Rwandan regime transforms international ambition into a national stalemate at the end of which the genocide of the Tutsi will occur. This regime cannot be a partner of France; it is reduced to the expression of an extremist clan that inexorably closes in on President Habyarimana because it has not helped him to leave the “inner circle” identified by Colonel Galinié. A regional logic, with Uganda’s interference in the Rwandan crisis, would justify France’s protection of Rwanda’s territorial and political integrity. “This logic obliges us to defend the regime in place in Kigali, which should represent 90% of the population of Rwanda (the Hutu).” Pierre Conesa concludes, with regard to this regime: “We know that this is not the case.”⁶¹¹

In order to explain this shift in French policy - from international ambition to national stagnation - Pierre Conesa applies himself to going deeper into what is indeed “a Rwandan crisis.” What he does not say, but what we can deduct from his analysis, is the dimension of this crisis, which is not only that of Rwanda, but a crisis of French thinking that prevents itself from conceiving the reality of Rwanda and substitutes another. French policy in Rwanda is in no way the test of a plan conceived at the La Baule summit, but rather the conservation of a system of French power over African States.

- It is a crisis without extra-continental dimensions. The first African crisis after the disappearance of the USSR, it does not interest any great power except France. The Americans have opted to deal with the Sudanese crisis and do not want to damage their relations with Uganda. France does not intervene as a guarantor of the continent’s stability, but merely as a police force, half internal, half external. The process that led to the French military presence will become more and more commonplace. The call for help from a declining dictator, challenged by democratization, who sees his opponents as henchmen of a foreign power, has already occurred in Togo and Zaire. Eyadema and Mobutu are examples. In both cases, France refused assistance. If the French withdrawal can be interpreted as a sign of abandonment by our traditional allies, our continued presence can also be interpreted as a guarantee offered to the dictators in place.

- This is a crisis that could be described as infra-media. In other words, public opinion is uninterested in it, and the media, which only rarely discuss it and often at a great distance from the official thesis, will probably only find new interest in it if French soldiers are killed there. The explanation of French policy would then suffer from a communication handicap.

- Rwanda is located on an arc of crisis that runs from Khartoum to Luanda. The proximity of Zaire in decomposition, South Sudan in revolt, Angola at war ... The area of crises in Africa is widening, and the classic argument of not withdrawing so as not to give the impression to our African friends that France is abandoning them, is out of line: what will happen when allied States faced with problems of the same nature, whether internal or external, call on us for help, for Casamance, the Tonaregs...? The Rwandan crisis is indeed a test, but probably more of our ability to rethink our policy in Africa than of our willingness to support our traditional allies.⁶¹²

7.2.1.6 INSTITUTIONAL THINKING AND COURAGE: THE CASE OF THE DELEGATION FOR STRATEGIC AFFAIRS

At the beginning of 1993, the DAS was a nascent service, imposed by Minister Pierre Joxe on his own ministry and on the officers of the Armed Forces Staff, who saw the risk that a part of strategic thinking might escape them. It is well known that relations between the military and the minister are not excellent. The former see the rise in power of civilian experts as a danger; they do not see them as an asset in collective thinking. On the other hand, the latter regularly take the military at face value and make them understand whose side intelligence is on. However, personal relationships of esteem are established that allow for immediate reaction to vicissitudes in the regular chain of command. This was particularly the case during the planning of Operation Turquoise, where the desire of certain warmongers to incorporate military action into the humanitarian intervention was observed. This temptation was stopped dead in its tracks by the smooth functioning of the institutions, with the DAS playing an interesting strategic watch role, thanks to the analytical power of its staff and its director, Jean-Claude Mallet. The DAS, however, like the Center for Analysis and Forecasting at the Quai d'Orsay.

These heads of watchdog institutions, or operational leaders as well as executive managers with the necessary critical sense,

fail to make divergent analyses heard, but also the very principle of intellectual confrontation. To fight further on these grounds would probably have been beyond their reach and power.

7.2.2 The period April-July 1994

7.2.2.1. IN THE SGDN. A RETREAT FROM CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Even before the period in question, the Secretariat General of National Defense produced an undated memo that was written after the signing of the Arusha Accords on 4 August, 1993. This memo, entitled “Sub-region of the Great Lakes of Africa: decisive developments for regional balance,” introduces a key point about the future of the agreements, namely an instrument of pressure and even of threat to the RPF, which, according to the author, could not escape the moment of truth. Indeed, as an organization of an ethnic nature [“Tutsi rebel movement,”⁶¹³ “Tutsi rebel movement RPF”⁶¹⁴] the RPF can only suffer a political defeat with the implementation of the agreements: “The Tutsi rebel movement will be wary of elections that are likely to be unfavorable to it and could relaunch various forceful actions in an attempt to bring down the Kigali regime.”⁶¹⁵

This memo from the SGDN inaugurates a clear shift in the Prime Minister’s department towards a radically anti-RPF position. The movement is locked into a dual identity that corresponds to only part of the reality. While Rwandan Tutsi exiles form the majority of the movement’s members, they rub shoulders with opposition Hutus within an organization that defines itself primarily by a political, not an ethnic, component. The RPF’s military identity is certainly real and powerful, but the movement also defends a diplomatic approach that led it to sign the Arusha Accords. Such analyses, which support the vision of an RPF in ambush and preparing for a coup, handicap the future of the agreements and the confidence that must be had in the negotiating parties. In addition, the ethnicist interpretation is applied to all the countries in the region, to the point, for example, of speaking of “ethnic alternation”⁶¹⁶ in Burundi. The risk of the spread of ethnic violence is posed on numerous occasions in the memo, given the “ethnic reflex specific to this region”: “Dramatic

chain reactions cannot be ruled out,”⁶¹⁷ summarizes the redactor, who sees this as an inescapable fact. The objective of the agreements thus appeared to be completely out of step, as if France had already given up supporting their application. Although it plays “a stabilizing role for the whole of a region [...], its limited interests remain limited (meaning of the phrase ?, EC).”⁶¹⁸

The May 1994 report on the “Great Lakes Region of Africa: the origins of inter-community antagonism”⁶¹⁹ also presents an analysis dominated by the ethnicist approach, which is aggravated by other factors.

*The social representations of Rwanda and Burundi, shaped by the colonizer, are today characterized by a conflictual ethnic divide aggravated by extreme overpopulation (around 250 inhabitants per km²), an acute agrarian problem (intensive cultivation and conflict between cattle breeders and farmers), the over-arming of parties and militias often benefiting from regional support, and opposing societal projects.*⁶²⁰

The conclusion reminds us, however, that “it would be reductive to reduce the conflicts in the Great Lakes region to simple ethnic conflicts between ‘Tutsi’ and ‘Hutu.’”⁶²¹ A document in the appendix radically contradicts this analysis, which seems to qualify the ethnicist approach. Two photographs are placed opposite each other, one in color showing “Juvénal Habyarimana (ex-President of Rwanda),” dressed in a civilian suit, against a background of greenery, his serene face emerging at the top of the image, the second showing “Paul Kagame (military leader of the RPF),” in uniform and wearing a military cap, lowered to the bottom of the image, this time in black and white, with an armed soldier in the background, the expression of his face almost frightening. A caption follows, “Hutu type” for the first image, “Tutsi type” for the second.

Thus, on 25 May, 1994, as it is possible to date the report precisely,⁶²² the SGDN sent the President of the Republic (“personal military staff. 2 ex. for the attention of Lieutenant General Quesnot”), the military office of the Prime Minister and numerous correspondents in the Ministry of Defense, a document with a clearly racist background. This racialism created, in Rwanda, the conditions for the genocide of the Tutsi that the government, through the voice of Alain Juppé, recognized on 16 May. One can therefore only wonder about the

chains of information flowing down from the authorities of the Republic to the agents of the State, about the link between such conceptions at the highest level, and the defeat of French policy in Rwanda.

7.2.3 Turquoise. End-of-mission reports, mid-term analyses and feedback

Like any military operation, Operation Turquoise led to the production of reports by the commanders of the various units involved, as well as by the person in charge. Poorly defined at the outset, very tricky in its planning, perilous and trying for those who carried it out, it is often analyzed succinctly and from an essentially operational point of view.

As Chapter 5 reminded us, the end-of-mission report is a required genre and follows fairly strict codes. The vast majority of the reports in question present the technical data of the operation and do not make any judgments about the meaning and purpose of the mission. If some leads are mentioned, they remain open-ended, without any answer.... Thus, the report by the head of the COS, Colonel Rosier, mentions “the fundamental problem of Rwanda, which is a question of historical perspective and human conscience,” but does not wish to “dwell on it.”⁶²³ In addition to Colonel Rosier’s report, that of another senior special operations officer, Commander Marin Gillier⁶²⁴ admits, without elaborating on his thoughts, that he cannot end his report “without mentioning the difficulty of fulfilling this mission for the men on the ground in the face of the extreme distress we encountered, and the problems of conscience that this created.”⁶²⁵

Finally, a last variation in the genre that constitutes the end-of-mission report is the “report based on impressions”, a memoir in a rather free style that aims less at a precise assessment than at the opening of a reflection. It is in this category that the report written by Lieutenant-Colonel Lebel, who was in charge of intelligence for the Turquoise force, can be classified.⁶²⁶ It is worth emphasizing this point, although it has already been mentioned in the chapter. In a less formal style than in previous reports, the senior officer paints a fairly rich picture of the functioning of the PCIAT, its occasional difficulties in integrating very voluminous intelligence, and in particular the difficulty in transmitting

this intelligence due to the limitations of communications systems. This report is part of the evolution of the military intelligence function in France, in general, and in the Army in particular, which regrouped all its intelligence and electronic warfare resources in 1993. Finally, it attests, at its own level, to the military laboratory nature of Operation Turquoise.

7.2.3.1 COLONEL SARTRE'S REPORT: A PARADOXICAL SPACE FOR FREEDOM

Colonel Patrice Sartre's report, dated 17 August, 1994 in Kibuye,⁶²⁷ differs from everything that was produced at the end of the Turquoise mission. As head of the Northern Group (or "November Grouping") of the Joint Task Force in Rwanda (GIAR), the senior officer, who was also commander of the 1st RICM, began by stressing the problem of military intelligence or URH, i.e. "their inability to communicate with the troops with whom they should be cooperating."⁶²⁸ He also wishes to alert us to the need for professionalization, which implies rigorous verification of the information provided to the units.⁶²⁹ His analysis can be applied to the false information of the existence of "maquis" of the infiltrated RPF.⁶³⁰

Secondly, he praises the work of the gendarmerie, the activity of the provost marshals, and the presence of an officer from this branch, who "must be considered absolutely necessary, both as legal advisor to the corps commander in his territorial responsibilities, and as organizer of the numerous operations to maintain order and provide security for official trips and meetings organized by the group, independently of the provost marshal tasks devolved to a possible provost marshal brigade commander."⁶³¹

This development should be seen in relation to Colonel Sartre's understanding of the logic behind the massacres of the civilian population and the means of stopping them,⁶³² without being able, as he confided, to "untangle the web of banditry networks and distinguish them from *Interahamwe* structures and RPF infiltrations": "Very quickly, the GIAR's Chief of Staff will acquire sufficient understanding of the massacres of the Tutsi to be able to put an end to them by simple psychological action." Colonel Sartre is the only redactor, among the authors of the end-of-mission reports, to insist on the main identity of the victims. The psychological action could have been redoubled if the commanding officer

“had benefited from an FM station as he described it in his end-of-mission report in Bosnia, and for which he provided SIRPA with a technical definition as well as a detailed estimate as early as February 1994.” Insisting on the importance of appropriate action on the ground, he draws lessons for the future:

As the foundation of this type of crisis management, relations with the populations remain an area with a large margin of progress both in the conception (to be effective without being accused of colonialism), and in that of coordination and conduct by the Civil Affairs unit, and finally in that of the training of officers.⁶³³

The emphasis on the gendarmerie indicates Colonel Sartre’s attention to due process, to the control of the law, but also, probably, to the operational capacities of the gendarmerie, especially in the fight against acts of genocide. Such a presence of the gendarmerie also compensates, through the resources of this corps, for the absence of clear directives, as the officer notes in a passage without euphemism:

It was not during the course of the action that we had to have any qualms about the bases of our authority over the SHZ. But once the operation is over, we will have to try to better define them for the future and include them in the training programs of the officers. The doctrine on which Turquoise was based was, in this area, much less developed (but admittedly much more flexible) than that implemented in the UN framework. It is not possible to be alone in the field without any reference text to guide one’s action. All kinds of hesitations, all kinds of mistakes and all kinds of media exploitation are to be feared, with no text to protect the victim from his or her own zeal and good will, after the disaster. The presence of a Gendarmerie officer among the liaison officers constituted an irreplaceable asset for the commanding officer in the daily assessment of his limits.⁶³⁴

Colonel Sartre does not specify what type of reference text would be necessary for the accomplishment of the mission. It is conceivable that he could refer to the nature of the massacres that had previously been qualified by the Security Council as genocide, which would then call for precise instructions on the actions to be taken and, contingently, on the possibility of apprehending the perpetrators under the judicial police authority that he recommended. There is a clear, albeit implicit, criticism of the fact that the Turquoise mission, although part of a UN framework

and approved by the Security Council, is far from complying with the standards in this area. The indecision that he notes concerns the entire mission, described on the first page of his report as “planned with clumsiness, engaged with caution and withdrawn progressively.”⁶³⁵

This critical assessment is aimed at the definition of the mission, which, as we have seen, was conceived as a military operation, particularly with the head of state, and then launched as a humanitarian operation desired by the Prime Minister. This reality explains the “absence of reference texts” noted by the colonel, but also the situations of mistrust and even hostility emanating from General Lfourcade’s staff for a corps commander who was clearly too lucid about the impasses of the mission: “More frequent personal contacts between commanders would have made it possible to establish more quickly and more intimately the climate of trust necessary for complicity in execution.”⁶³⁶

Colonel Sartre is particularly severe about the “great failure of Turquoise, the humanitarian action will have been inadequate and insufficient, not meeting the needs of the population and depriving crisis management of a privileged tool.” He added: “The Civil Affairs Unit, incompetent to help the Groupings in civil matters (provisional administration, legal advice, etc.), proved powerless to provide the humanitarian resources required on the ground.”⁶³⁷ This failure, so clearly stated, was based on the lack of humanitarian resources deployed in the field at an early stage, the priority being to engage the best combat units of the French army, with the COS, the Legion and the conventional navy troops. The resources available were therefore initially mainly military. The officer points to the problem of the initial definition of the mission, which had to be reinvented as a humanitarian operation without any real means or clear instructions. Its success depended on the adaptability and initiative of the command and the men on the ground. Colonel Sartre insisted on the need to quickly rely on reliable administrations, i.e. those not involved in the Tutsi genocide. He defended his choice to call for a rapid handover of the zone to the new authorities in Kigali.

Colonel Patrice Sartre’s position and the criticisms that he developed

during Operation Turquoise were already perceptible in his exchanges with Admiral Lanxade when the latter visited the Turquoise zone. Several meetings took place, including one with the staff of the Northern Group. Following the presentations of his subordinates, Colonel Sartre pointed out the limits of the operation and warned the Armed Forces chief of staff of the risks it entailed, referring to the situation of France in Rwanda between 1990 and 1993. The exchange was filmed by ECPA operators, in the form of rushes, which the Research Commission transcribed in full. A mounting tension is clearly visible between the two soldiers, with Admiral Lanxade limiting his remarks to generalities when the situation seems inextricable.

Voice-over [Sartre]⁶³⁸: *The first problem, at the moment, the WFP [World Food Program] is arriving in Bujumbura, where 1 million people consume all the aid. Second problem, a problem of timing, that's what the person in charge told me.*

Apparté Lanxade-Roques [inaudible]

Lafourcade : Passage of [inaudible / question about parachuting]

Sartre: In drop, no possible terrain in the region, in parachuting there is no possibility because the houses are much too dense to take this risk, you can only have damage, or else in very rare areas, but there is no means of access to collect what has been dropped.

Lafourcade: The COS did two, successfully, but it's rather symbolic, I must say, but there are some [inaudible] with the population all around, well organized, applauding, at the very least, we could have gone by truck.

Roques: We're in [inaudible]. In terms of the sanitary situation, it's going very well, but we know that cholera is coming, in terms of food, people are weakened, we have health risks [inaudible].

Lafourcade: [inaudible] It's going to be fine, the message came really late here, at least here in the rear

Roques: It's strange

Sartre: I'm answering the general's question, I think we're a few days away from people starting to go home, I'm only talking about this region, I'm not talking about the SHZ. In Kibuye, we managed to get people to leave a little earlier, here, for other reasons, they're more hesitant, but I think that if the RPF doesn't do anything stupid in the next two days, they'll go home.

Stabenrath: There are actions that we intend to carry out in the zone, that we have begun to carry out; first of all, to reassure the population so that they are not subjected to panic movements that would only aggravate the problems in Cyangugu and in Zaire. We went from the French side [Sartre points to the north] to the field, maintaining units on

the ground to create security poles so that day and night we have people in the area, and each section is responsible for an area that it patrols constantly and for which it also assesses the humanitarian problems. To follow up on disarmament, because there are still many weapons and these weapons are necessarily a source of insecurity, when weapons are seized, the population participates in the seizure of the weapons because they tell us who has weapons and they feel reassured.

Next, we need to improve communication in order to put a stop to a certain number of rumors, most of which are totally false: when people talk about huge Pol Pot-style concentration camps, the ICRC has told us that this is materially impossible, but we need to calm people down. What we also want to do is to support the setting up of local structures, we are in the process of launching an initiative committee in Gikongoro, which would try to revive public life a little; to be an element of contact with the NGOs to inform them of the problems, and also to be an element of contact with us to be able to study a possible movement of refugees back to the East. We have contacts with the committees in the camps that we take as interlocutors, the Rwandans are very organized, they spend their time evaluating each other [inaudible/military organization] and they know perfectly well how things are going. And also to support the burgomasters who have remained in place because, curiously, there are a certain number who have remained, notably of PSD tendency, who do not feel too threatened by the RPF, and also to encourage the appointment of provisional burgomasters so that someone can take care of the security problems and possibly recreate [cut and repeat on Lanxade].

Lanxade: From our good will I would say, and at the same time we see how things are going

Sartre⁶³⁹: I think that the problem.... Before answering, I would like to add an element that has been worrying me a lot, for thirty-six hours, not even, that's why I didn't realize it, general, excuse me, admiral, we have been in a neo-colonial situation, we are going to be reproached for it soon, concretely on the ground, which poses daily problems where we will end up slipping one day. We are asked to care for people, no problem, except that we don't have much to care for them, we are asked to feed them, we don't have anything to feed them, so far so good, we are asked to prevent massacres, which implies the possible use of weapons, that can be criticized, but as long as we are in the wave of emotion it will pass.

[Voice-over Lanxade?]: We have a mandate

Sartre: We are asked to prevent looting, already, to a certain extent, since we are defending the [...].

But now we are being asked to investigate robberies, looting,

and murders, and we are not doing so.

But the country will not be able to live for long with this total absence of administration, especially the communal administration

*So we are going to find ourselves, we have already been in this situation for two days, that is, since the great waves of emotion have passed, where if we do not move forward, the country will continue to evolve, will evolve without us, and in particular we will create a vacuum that will in fact attract the RPF, and this is what the burgomasters are already saying: "the government must come, it must send us a gendarmerie, it must send us a police force, we want prefects." And at the same time, and if we take this step that everyone is asking us to take, we enter into the realm that we have experienced in previous years, in the French army where [...]*⁶⁴⁰

Lanxade⁶⁴¹: *The administration [...]*

Sartre: *UNAMIR, like most peace forces, has always acted in the presence of the administration. [Voice-over CEMA: Yes, absolutely.] I can see the pattern of UNAMIR arriving, the administration [...] setting up. That said, the administration can be set up two ways, there are two aspects; there is the communal aspect, the communes are very important, they manage a very large part of public life, contrary to what happens in France, and I think that here we have put in place a certain number of people recognized by the population, who sometimes held these functions before, I think that we can take the first step that they are asking us to do, that is, to put them in contact with the RPF.*

Lafourcade: *My idea is to say "yes," but all of this within the SHZ. I don't see myself supporting, if you will, politically [Lanxade: you have to be very careful] a green light from the RPF [for] [voice-over Roques? and that this triggers exoduses].*

Sartre: *In any case, you will have the exodus a little later, you will have it a little later.*

I believe that we have the possibility of ensuring that these first contacts between the people opposite the RPF take place in a calm manner

Lanxade: *Well, we have to think about it [Admiral's tense face, closed expression] That being the case, the concern I have is that when Dallaire, well, Dallaire, his idea was to put two companies in place to hold the entire Gikongoro zone [Sartre intervenes, voice-over: "strategically no"], then he's going to come in with one company. So I suggest that, first of all, [...] we hand over part of the zone to him, that there be a clear transfer, if you will, so that one day, you or someone else will say to UNAMIR: "Now it's you, you're taking over this part of the zone," and you'll leave the area, this part of the zone.*

Sartre: *That said, it's not much less than what we have (UNAMIR)*

Lanxade: *He will arrive with a company on the 7th.*

Lafourcade: *A company on the 7th, that is to say, Admiral, you have two company sectors at the moment, ideally he would have a complete sector at UNAMIR with the head of UNAMIR in liaison with [Rubengeri]*

Roques: *But then, in order to make the bed of UNAMIR properly, there will be a company that will arrive first, there will have to be a short period where the company will be in both sectors and will work with us, because we saw that with the Senegalese [...]*

Lafourcade: *No*

Lanxade: *I don't really want that, I don't really want that, because it's true that the situation is very, very uncertain. Our interest is to have things a little, quite clear [...] I think that we should, I would much prefer [...] you still have a week to think about it, but I would much prefer, that we tell them: well, you arrive with a company, you take the southern sector, or the northern sector, I don't know, it's up to you to decide, knowing that after that it will be Kibuye and it will be Cyangugu, you decide which one you give, and then you withdraw, then maybe they can send a team before for two three days, 24 or 36 hours...*

Stabenrath: *The future commander of the battalion came here [...]*

Lanxade: *And what impression did he make on you?*

Stabenrath: *Very good*

Lanxade: *But you see, we have to show that the French government [...]*

It will be especially true for the first time that we do it.

And I also have this problem with the French government. You have to know that as soon as we do this, or they will say "pack your bags."

From that point on, we have to see, but you can understand what my concern is.

Between Colonel Sartre and Admiral Lanxade, two conceptions of the injunction to *look* are clearly opposed. The first applies himself to looking at the reality on the ground, which is enormously difficult, the second endeavors to show an expected reality. Between the two commanders, there is a clash of knowledge of the field, of intelligence of the situations, of the ordeal of the genocide. For Operation Turquoise, on the ground, shows a commitment, a sacrifice even, of officers and soldiers, doctors and nurses in an attempt to succeed in the humanitarian mission.

7.2.3.2 OBSERVATORY OF OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Halfway through Operation Turquoise, some perspective analyses were produced, including those of the "Observatory of Operational Activities" of the Armed Forces staff. Four reports on Turquoise⁶⁴²

were written by Lieutenant-Colonel Aubert.⁶⁴³ Two are strictly technical, concerning “command” and “planning.” The other two contain more in-depth information and analysis on the “Turquoise mission.” The “Humanitarian Mission” report outlines the following points, which are transcribed in full:

The initial orientation of the Turquoise mission had two components, a humanitarian component in the south (CYANGUGU) and a military component in the north (GOMA) with possible action towards Kigali.⁶⁴⁴

The mission became essentially humanitarian.

Findings:

- *the size of the forces seems exaggerated for a humanitarian mission 2 500H and 12 combat aircraft.*
- *Is the armament adapted to this type of mission? Do we have the appropriate weaponry? (example: the rockets of the planes are hollow charges, more adapted against tanks than against ground troops).*
- *The effort has been focused on the north (GOMA) while the actions are carried out from the south. It was planned to place the EMMIR in GOMA, but in the end it was placed in CYANGUGU (it was not operational until the evening of 4 July, 14 days after the beginning of the operation).*
- *The logistical support battalion is one of the last units to arrive on the ground. There are problems with the distribution of supplies to the population, although 37 tons of medicine have been delivered by the Turquoise force. Other problems are related to NGOs and are not directly under our control.*

The “Electronic Warfare” report also raises some crucial points:

Electronic warfare actions are not mentioned :

- *neither in the operation order*
- *nor in the specific directive*
- *nor in the operation order n° 1 of the COMFORCE*

We note that the radio station known as the “mille collines,” which incited massacres and was anti-French (broadcasting in Kigali), was not the object of any action whatsoever on 5 July (jamming, destruction, etc.).

The reports of the missions carried out in the former Yugoslavia all mention the importance of the impact of the radio and television means on the population within the framework of the humanitarian missions.

On the morning of 7 July, COMFORCE asked the COLA for instructions on the possible jamming of this radio.

The Army and the Air Force have five 500 W jammers and one 1 KW jammer that can be airlifted and that would probably be able to jam or even replace the transmitter of mille collines.

On 11 October, 1994, a presentation session on Operation Turquoise was organized for the Minister of Defense.⁶⁴⁵ Colonel Salvignol was one of the speakers. The written text of his conference emphasized the operational innovations of the operation. However, from the introduction, he sets out his framework, that of a “real genocide” which he defines precisely and rigorously.

*The civil war, rekindled by the assassination of the Rwandan president on 6 April, 1994, resulted in a real genocide perpetrated by certain Rwandan military units (the Presidential Guard) and by Hutu militias against the Tutsi minority of the population or certain moderate Hutu leaders. Thus, invoking the need to rescue them, RPF forces invaded the entire eastern part of the country in two months of fighting, as far as the Rubengeri-Shyorongi line in the north and Kigali-Gitarama-Nyanza in the center.*⁶⁴⁶

An assessment of Operation Turquoise is presented, which notes that it “put an end to the massacres perpetrated in Rwanda and made it possible to ensure the protection of the population in the safe humanitarian zone, as well as the transition to UNAMIR II under good conditions.”⁶⁴⁷ The “Comments and Questions” section ends with the observation that “military and moral” training explains the adaptability of soldiers faced with situations that go beyond what they were prepared for, forced to think about a mission with imprecise contours. The objective of “stopping the massacres” came up against the reality of a terrain that was still massively controlled by those responsible for the genocide, while the killings of Tutsi continued.⁶⁴⁸ If, as for Colonel Tauzin, an armed confrontation with the RPF remains possible (and desired), for most of the officers and their soldiers, the priority, once the reality is understood, is to intimidate the genocidaires and disarm the militias. The imprecision of the mandate allowed for initiatives of this nature, authorized and covered by General Lafourcade, who proved to be an operation commander determined to succeed in the humanitarian aspect of the mission. The ability to refocus the action in the face of genocide, within the limits of what was possible, was a challenge for the men of Turquoise, a challenge of which they became aware for the most part. Their ability to adapt is put to the test. The operation is an ordeal from which none of the soldiers, doctors, nurses, or other personnel emerge unscathed.

This is Colonel Salvignol's conclusion.

It also showed, if it were necessary, the quality of the men who were involved, their preparation and their degree of adaptation to a military-humanitarian situation that never ceased to evolve between the "all military" and the "all humanitarian."

This is largely the consequence of the training, both military and moral, given to the cadres in the various schools of our armies.

The incomprehension was total when the first criticisms were levelled at Turquoise. A researcher from the CNRS, a consultant to CAP, wrote a harsh critique of "preventive diplomacy" which, in the case of Rwanda, proved to be a complete failure. The "military-humanitarian intervention" sanctions this failure. For Roland Marchal, the French authorities maintained a constant ambiguity about the objectives of the mission, which was only saved from failure by a surge of troops on the ground and the decision of the cadres, sometimes against the advice of Paris, to favor the transfer of administrations to the RPF. Otherwise, as Colonel Sartre expressed it to Admiral Lanxade, the risk of neo-colonialism would soon be reached:

It was not until 20 July, when the interim government collapsed, that French troops really applied international laws and had a less ambiguous attitude towards local administrative officials. The reluctance of members of the new government in Kigali to visit the French army led the new Rwandan prime minister to make some rather cool statements about a second colonization. It is worth mentioning, to the great merit of our military, the attempts to establish here and there alternative structures that are quite similar in idea to the South African peace committees whose work is remarkable to this day.⁶⁴⁹

An unsigned handwritten analysis, accompanying a copy of the researcher's report in the Army archives, categorically rejects the criticisms, without, strangely enough, mentioning the laudatory elements. It seems that Operation Turquoise, like France's engagement, cannot be examined on its merits, once the brief period of critical assessments has passed.

7. 2. 4 A time of critical assessments as soon as it is over

Critical assessments of France's policy in Rwanda were indeed sketched out in the second half of 1994. But they were quickly interrupted.

7.2.4.1 AT THE SGDN. BRIEF INVESTIGATION WITH GENERAL LAFOURCADE

The archives of the General Secretariat of National Defense contain the minutes of a meeting with the Commander of Operation Turquoise.⁶⁵⁰ It is stated that on 26 October, 1994, Lieutenant-Colonel Olivier Tramond, the “Central Africa” expert of the Strategic Assessment Directorate, met with General Lafourcade in Toulouse. According to the redactor, two main topics were discussed: “- the lessons learned from Operation ‘Turquoise’ and, in particular, its consequences for the French position in the Great Lakes region of Africa and its transposability to other theaters; - the relevance of the concept of an inter-African force for the settlement of crises in Africa.”

According to General Lafourcade, as reported by the SGDN expert, “the Rwandan tragedy unquestionably marks a retreat of the French position in Rwanda,” and the commander of Operation Turquoise explains this situation by serious errors in France’s analysis in Rwanda: France, “which favored the Arusha process, was not able to detect in time the authoritarian drift of President Habyarimana’s regime, nor to quickly and clearly distance itself, after the attack of 6 April, 1994, from the Hutu interim government.”⁶⁵¹

With regard to Operation Turquoise itself, he stressed that “the two determining factors for its technical success were authorized by Security Council Resolution 929: these two factors are the national command and the authorization of the force.”⁶⁵²

7.2.4.2 THE CAP, AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Roland Marchal’s critical report, “Une lecture de l’opération Turquoise au Rwanda,” (A Reading of Operation Turquoise in Rwanda)⁶⁵³ does not only focus on the military intervention and the obscurities it raises. The criticism of French diplomacy, while shorter, is no less severe.

France knows Rwanda because it has been there for a long time; it did not know how to prevent the crisis, nor did it, or the international community, learn the lessons of nearby situations or experiences (Mogadishu, for example, where it is believed that a rapid restoration of order would have avoided massacres by militias). Finally, after the death of President Habyarimana on 6 April, the closure of the French embassy

(on 12 April) and until the beginning of Operation Turquoise on 22 June, the “long period of observation,” i.e., the absence on the ground, did not allow for political intervention. The author therefore speaks of a “failure of preventive diplomacy”⁶⁵⁴ and of what he would like to see put in place.

This failure does not show the blindness of France, which did not analyze the succession of massacres, nor did it see the conditioning of the population against the Tutsi by the administration, from the burgomasters to the prefects, supported by the militias and propaganda radio stations. This blindness explains why France “demonized” the RPF, which was considered an enemy, and masked the violence within the country, the ethnic massacres and those of opponents, despite the warnings given by the various human rights investigations, particularly that of 1993. “Should we see in our blindness the consequences of a policy or of a radical ignorance of the political history of this region obscured by the Francophone fact?”⁶⁵⁵ The blindness, in any case, is considered “total”:

*This shows that our diplomatic apparatus did not work at all. We must then try to draw the consequences. Some, the most important ones, are political and do not fall within the scope of this report. Others are of a quasi-institutional nature and should be evaluated by the competent services. It is already clear that the crisis unit must be strengthened by having a pool of diplomats who, in the event of an alert, would be available to support the ambassador in office. Relations with Uganda, the United States and other State actors would have justified the presence and support of another diplomat who could also have contained the very marked hostility of the RPF and the opposition to our ambassador in Kigali. One percent of the Operation Turquoise budget allocated to a budget line devoted to preventive diplomacy would have been more than enough to prevent this disaster.*⁶⁵⁶

The failure of diplomacy at the European level proved to be an aggravating factor in the failure of preventive diplomacy: “The attitude of our European allies was totally inappropriate for this crisis situation.”⁶⁵⁷ In future crises, Roland Marchal argues, the European Union and the Western European Union (for the military aspects) must be mobilized. He called for “a campaign of explanation on this theme so as not to witness a debate without conclusion during a future intervention.” He insists:

*Europe cannot simply ignore this new reality in crisis management. Its participation would have made it possible to remove many ambiguities, while proving the functionality of certain mechanisms.*⁶⁵⁸

In parallel to Europe's absence in the Rwandan crisis, another actor was missing: the experts themselves. Through them, these are the warnings that should have been taken into account and that were not.⁶⁵⁹ For Roland Marchal, most of them admitted that from the end of 1991, "a project to destabilize the political process by those close to the regime using the pretext provided by the war" was being put in place. The temptation is common in Africa, he believes. "But in Rwanda, the means used and the goals pursued should have given rise to concern and appropriate reactions."⁶⁶⁰ The warnings were ignored. Why was this? The researcher raises questions of intellectual method as well as of the ethics of action that were absolutely essential at the given time. He reasons from a concrete experience that calls for critical judgment. This is essential for a democracy if it does not want to repeat the errors of the past, if it wants to make failures the basis for renewal:

If such reminders are made, it is less to blame ad nauseam a bloody failure of our diplomacy than to suggest taking into account the cardinal elements of a rise in violence. Preventive diplomacy can only work if it has identified and prioritized the key variables in the shift towards violent confrontation. Should we see in our blindness the consequences of a policy or the effects of a radical ignorance of the political history of this region, obscured by the Francophone fact?

*A final remark is necessary and concerns the Parisian management of such crises. The people in charge of these files are already overloaded by their activities. It is therefore quite possible and human that reactions were somewhat delayed, even when some of the flashing lights of a crisis were lit up because the previous one had barely ended. Without in any way underestimating the capabilities of the members of the crisis unit, this problem should be examined more calmly and a better solution found. Similarly, we should also invest in training or sensitizing our diplomats to preventive diplomacy: 5% of the budget for Operation Turquoise would have given the Department considerable means to support a more dynamic handling of this crisis before 6 April or 22 June, and perhaps saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.*⁶⁶¹

The misunderstood alerts nevertheless signaled mechanisms of extreme violence that set up very worrying processes. The descriptions given by Roland Marchal present situations that heralded a genocide against the Tutsi:

The list of events that are part of this strategy would be long: one would have to start with the Murambi incidents in November 1991, followed in March 1992 by massacres of Tutsi in the Bugesera zone, then after other incidents during the summer, it was at the end of 1992-beginning of 1993 that extreme violence broke out in the Gisenyi prefecture. In all these cases, there was a mobilization that always took place thanks to the conditioning of local populations not only by burgomasters, sub-prefects, prefects or notables of the former single party, but also by radio and the use on a large scale of the militias of the presidential party, whose monopoly was contested by the political opening.⁶⁶²

Rwanda is “the absolute tragedy,”⁶⁶³ which was belatedly taken into account by public opinion, which was more marked by the cholera epidemic than by the genocide. The military-humanitarian intervention was mounted because of the failure of diplomacy. The researcher’s assessment is nuanced. He appears less critical of the errors of Turquoise than of the diplomatic failure. He questions the sending of special forces for a humanitarian operation, the establishment of the SHZ, and relations with NGOs. The questioning of the neutrality of the operation is underlying. The initial intervention of these elite troops is not, however, to be blamed on Turquoise: they are seasoned, well-trained soldiers who know how to avoid “committing reckless acts.”⁶⁶⁴ The advantage over UN forces is that they can be deployed more quickly than peacekeepers, who must first be protected before they can be deployed: this was therefore a good choice. However, on the ground, the beginnings were tense and awkward because these soldiers were marked by the usual anti-RPF political discourse, which was the enemy to be defeated, before understanding that their mission was humanitarian. Moreover, their relations with the FAR and the genocidal authorities were problematic but unavoidable, especially in the SHZ.

The notion of a safe humanitarian zone has its place in international law as a “humanitarian corridor.” The SHZ has been criticized for its location, in Rwandan territory, in a region that is overwhelmingly populated by Hutu, which has made it, for its detractors, a “killers’ den”⁶⁶⁵ in which disarmament has only been effective since the fall of the IRG. Even if it did not always live up to expectations, the author sees it as a useful construction, and he praises the fact that the military was able to set up administrative structures that were an alternative to the old ones.⁶⁶⁶

The sharpest criticism concerns the relations of the Turquoise soldiers with the NGOs, even though the mission was humanitarian. Roland Marchal recognizes that relations between the two are never easy, but he regrets that cooperation between the army and the NGOs was not intense enough to be effective, and he blames the former, which had little or no training in humanitarian missions. He therefore suggested the creation of a “specialization of humanitarian officers”⁶⁶⁷ who would do internships in NGOs to better understand them in order to better articulate their work. While Turquoise set up its antenna in Goma from day one and an EMMIR in Cyangugu, no doubt influenced by the humanitarian organizations, Marchal regrets that they were unable to impose their logistics, which the army should have followed.⁶⁶⁸ For the future, he suggests that a regional approach be developed to foster relations and use the infrastructures of the border countries. Finally, the researcher praises the effectiveness of the links between the French contingents and the inter-African contingent, although he doubts the possibilities of maintaining them in other cases.

7.2.4.3 AT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, THE DAS IN ITS WORK

On 29 August 1994, the Deputy Director of the Delegation for Strategic Affairs wrote a brief on the “Report, dated March 1993, of the International Federation of Human Rights on human rights violations in Rwanda since 1 October 1990.” General Wiroth rereads this investigation in light of the “genocide perpetrated in Rwanda after the death of President Habyarimana on 6 April, 1994.” He explains that “the victims were generally members of the same Tutsi families, from one attack to the next. It was only at the end of 1992 that Hutu who were members of opposition parties and accused, as such, of complicity with the RPF rebels were themselves attacked.”

*In any case, the report shows that it was a highly structured system that allowed the organization of these massacres [committed between October 1990 and March 1992]. This system is also said to have been behind the genocide perpetrated in Rwanda after the death of President Habyarimana on 6 April, 1994.*⁶⁶⁹

On 24 February, 1995, a new memo by Pierre Conesa, analyzes “the mechanisms of reproduction of the Rwandan and Burundian crises.”⁶⁷⁰ He emphasizes that “the chronology of ethnic explosions seems to respond

to a rather particular political rhythm. When the central power weakens, it tends to use the ethnic question as an instrument, and to provoke massacres. [...] Socio-ethnicism has become a practice of internal politics in Africa.”

Unlike the Deputy Director of the DAS, Pierre Conesa does not explicitly mention the Tutsi genocide. He does not distinguish the event from previous massacres, but rather follows the functionalist *doxa* in vogue among certain specialists on Africa for whom “the massacres play, in fact, the role of demographic regulator.” However, he discusses “the quasi-scientific nature of certain killings” in which “the eminent responsibility of politicians” is perceptible. In fact, he reintroduces the dimension of the genocidal fact and its radical difference from interethnic massacres. He insists on “the involvement of administrative structures,” “evident for example in the massacres of this year.” The “Rwandan tragedy” that he describes in this way distinguishes it from other situations, notably Burundi, where the tipping point into genocide is prevented by the strength - relative but real - of the State and the army.

It is therefore essential in these countries [Burundi and Rwanda] that the forces be reduced to a symbolic dimension, as no risk of serious international conflict is perceptible. The Rwandan tragedy obliges us to ask ourselves what modes of military cooperation are most likely to avoid this kind of drift.⁶⁷¹

Pierre Conesa goes further and, in a memo dated the same day, engages in an exercise of “a posteriori analysis of the unfolding of the Rwandan crisis throughout 1994.” This second production of 24 February - in which Colonel Mourgeon, the future general in charge of the “Rwanda unit” at the Ministry of Defense in 1998, was associated within the framework of the MIP - proposed a “political-military evaluation of the crisis in Rwanda,”⁶⁷² and was an analysis “of a new kind.” It engages in a double examination, of “the specificity of the Rwandan crisis and the means of state information,” and of “the explanations given to French policy in post-crisis works and the image of the different actors,” opening the way to important “reflections on the tools of crisis management.” This third part of the analysis, on “reflections,” concludes with a final warning:

The authors do not intend to give lessons but try to draw some

*elements of reflection. These could perhaps be used to prevent the explosion of a crisis that is becoming more and more acute every day, that of Burundi. Unfortunately, it must be noted that none of the elements that reproduce crises in this region have disappeared.*⁶⁷³

The two authors refer to the annexes of their memo. One of them presents a document on the “ten commandments of the Hutu” as they were published in December 1990 by the extremist newspaper *Kangura*, in a historic issue whose last page is devoted to a photo of President Mitterrand with the caption: “A true friend of Rwanda.” And to insist: “The ten commandments are extremely clear.” In the memo, the authors explain that this fact, like the testimony of Janvier Afrika, a former member of the Zero networks, who spoke to the press in October 1990, “had to attract the attention of the Kigali post.”⁶⁷⁴ In the same way, the “more or less organized massacres that heralded the tragic reality of the summer of 1994” should have been of greater concern to the diplomats in office, especially since there had been many warnings about the seriousness of the FIDH report, including, as the authors mention, that of the historian Jean-Pierre Chrétien “in an article in the March 1993 issue of the journal *Esprit*,” not to mention the DGSE’s files. The clear-sightedness of the service is commended here.

*[Only] the DGSE, in a memo dated 12 January, 1994, alerted those in charge to the existence of a strategy of provocation by Interahamwe militias (militias of the government party) against RPF forces in Kigali, and against the Belgian Paras. It drew attention to the particular responsibilities of the CEMA of the Rwandan Armed Forces. Thereafter, the DGSE regularly publicized President Habyarimana’s policy of blocking the reconciliation process and the distribution of arms to the population... (memo of 24 February, 1994). After the evacuation of the embassy on 12 April, 1994, the DGSE alone continued to provide information. Initially interested in the course of the hostilities, it quickly drew attention (memo of 4 May, 1994) to the scale of the massacres committed mainly by government forces (not forgetting those committed, to a lesser extent, by the RPF). At the same time, the DGSE proposed a public condemnation without appeal of the actions of the Presidential Guard and of Colonel Bagosora, Director of the Cabinet of the Minister of Defense.*⁶⁷⁵

On the other hand, the inadequacies of the diplomatic post in Kigali were severely criticized, as was the crisis unit convened in Paris.

Until the evacuation of the French embassy in Kigali on 12 April, 1994, the TDs and analyses of the military post focused on subjects that could

be of interest to the French government authorities: Thus, the primacy given to the various developments in the Arusha negotiations, to the tremors of internal dissension within the RPF, to the advances or retreats of the front lines during the resumption of hostilities, completely masked the analysis of President Habyarimana's resistance in the application of the various versions of the agreements, or, much more seriously, the establishment of the networks and militias responsible for the future genocide. Throughout its genesis, the crisis was thought of in too strictly political terms (RPF versus Habyarimana, Anglophonie versus Francophonie...) rather than in ethnic and social terms. Thus, the French government offered hospitality to figures who would later prove to be "genocide VIPs" (Mrs. Habyarimana, Protais Zigiranyirazo "Mr. Z," Fernand Nahimana, the genocide ideologue, etc.). When the extent of the genocide becomes known, the political authorities will have to lump all the figures of the governmental party together in the same opprobrium, following the analysis of the press, for lack of detailed knowledge of the role of the various actors. As a result, the French government was deprived of interlocutors: neither RPF, nor governmental authorities. [...]

The line of conduct of the Kigali post must be read as the combined result of three rules of diplomatic conduct: the practice of a usual diplomatic line (contacts first with the authorities), implicit in a crisis situation (little contact with the opposition), or displayed (no contact with the RPF). The resulting shortcomings proved serious in the course of the crisis, when two missions, official and unofficial, had to be sent to meet (at last!) the RPF leaders, while Operation Turquoise was being set up. It therefore seems useful, when a crisis unit is set up, to involve, as far as possible, expert figures from outside the administration whose information does not depend exclusively on government resources and who maintain contacts with the various parties to the conflict (see Appendix 4). This is a technique that is generally used in crisis management in other large democracies.

On the basis of critical works, including that of Pierre Erny, published before the genocide,⁶⁷⁶ the two experts, Pierre Conesa and Colonel Mourgeon, believe "that the success of Operation Turquoise did not wash away the sins of connivance with President Habyarimana's regime." The analysis is unambiguous, even though no supporting documents were provided on the continued delivery of arms to the FAR until July 1994. The Commission has not been able to find the DAS working files that led to the report of 24 February, 1995.⁶⁷⁷ However, it is specified later that these are "rumors" and that it is necessary to "sort out the rumors."

*The personal links established between French decision-makers and Rwandan officials. From the highest level of the State to the managers of the dossier in the various French administrations, most of the policy is analyzed as a matter of networks, of reserved areas and of hidden decisions. Thus, the various authors see in the continuation of arms deliveries to the FAR until July 1994, proof of the heterogeneity of French actions in support of the defunct regime, and the difficulty of making out a general policy.*⁶⁷⁸

These latter analyses are based on the conclusions of a number of works and studies, a precaution that the authors of the report take care to specify. However, they do so deliberately, knowing that such references, in an official report by one of the central services of the Ministry of Defense, take on a value, if not indisputable, at least recognized.

The purpose of these critical reminders - because external assertions are not taken up without distance - is to launch, in the words of the memo of 24 February 1995, "a reflection on crisis management tools."

III Reflections on crisis management tools

Rwanda and first of all the failure of a certain form of preventive diplomacy. There have been many international efforts to try to resolve the crisis (Arusha I and II agreements, UN involvement, deployment of forces with UNAMIR, etc.). We can try to identify some explanations for this failure:

- The difference in positions between the main countries interested in the solution of the crisis. France and Belgium have played in different diplomatic directions, giving contradictory signals; the former continuing to deliver arms and support to the regime, while the latter ceases all military cooperation.

- The specificity of the crisis was not taken into account. The action taken against the political actors in Arusha was to be coupled with a very firm action against the figures preparing the genocide. Neither Radio Mille Collines, nor the intellectuals calling for the massacre, nor the ethnic foundations of the Rwandan State were taken into account and dealt with.

- All the international pressure tactics were not used simultaneously and in parallel to enforce the Arusha Accords, both on Rwanda and on Uganda, the RPF's protective power.

- UNAMIR, with a mandate and above all insufficient means, was unable to oppose the beginning of the massacres of which it was itself a victim, with the assassination of ten Belgian blue helmets, charged with protecting the Prime Minister, Madame Agathe UWILINGIYIMANA. One can read with horror the account given by Colette Braeckman of this tragic episode (Annex 5). In retrospect, one may

*wonder whether Operation Amaryllis to evacuate the nationals should not have been conceived as a reinforcement of UNAMIR and thus as a way to stop the incipient massacres in the capital. In its strictly military aspect, preventive diplomacy in Africa must therefore act on the local reality (disarmament of militias, civilian police mandate, (...)) to contribute to hindering the amplifying factors of the crisis.*⁶⁷⁹

It is interesting to underline the reflection on the UNAMIR Amaryllis crossover. At the time of the event,⁶⁸⁰ very few contemporaries considered the hypothesis of a joint French-United Nations intervention to “stop the incipient massacres in the capital.”⁶⁸¹

7.2.5 Satisfaction and silence from French diplomacy

The critical dimension of the report by researcher Roland Marchal or those of the DAS experts is absent, however, from another report drawn up almost simultaneously and submitted by its author, Jean-Marc de La Sablière, still director of the DAM, to his minister. Official marks and references to cabinet members, Bernard Emié and Nathalie Loiseau Ducoulombier, appear on the document consulted in the Juppé Ministry’s archives⁶⁸² : “This analysis seems to me to be very relevant. I wonder if we could not refer the matter to the WEU, from whom we had asked for help, to encourage it to reflect on its failure to act.” There is no mention of France’s possible failure to act in Rwanda in this diplomatic report, although it is entitled: “The lessons to be learned from the Rwandan crisis.” The analysis that emerges is that the intervention in Rwanda was “a risky operation” which “everyone agrees today was a success.” One month after France’s withdrawal from Rwanda, the DAM continues, “we can try to learn some lessons from the crisis, concerning Africa, the United Nations, Europe, our country’s actions and the management of Operation Turquoise in Paris.” Jean-Marc de La Sablière recognizes, in light of “the Rwandan crisis as well as the Burundi crisis [...] the limits of preventive diplomacy on the continent,” especially when the parties involved are armed. These crises also remind us of “the attention that must be paid to the ethnic dimension of conflicts,” adding: “This can lead in some cases to favour

power sharing at first, even if this has the effect of delaying elections.”

Although he is silent on French responsibilities, the DAM is very keen to point out the failings of the OAU, the United Nations and Europe. He mentions, with regard to France’s partners, that the latter’s action on the continent “is always suspected and misunderstood,” the fault being blamed on the former, while the policy of the latter is praised:

Operation Turquoise showed that France remained the only power with an African vocation. No other country could have done what we did. [...] The success of Operation Turquoise reinforces our standing in the world. Our African policy contributes to giving France a special status. This is an asset that we must not lose.

Finally, the analysis of the “crisis management system” shows that it “worked well,” essentially according to the DAM because the “interministerial consultation mechanism in Paris [was] led by the department,” while the military, although showing “once again their great knowledge of Africa and their professionalism,” appeared to be responsible for “the weight of the staff in a military operation, the media coverage of the operation, and the difference in culture between the ministries.” This praise that Foreign Affairs offers for its action in the “Rwandan crisis” ignores the reality of the field and of history. Thus, the genocide of the Tutsi, although recognized by Minister Alain Juppé as well as by the UN and the OAU, and the final catastrophe into which Rwanda was plunged, are not mentioned in any way. Contrary to the examples cited above of memos and reports that are both more precise and more critical, this production, with its stated ambitions, appears to be very poor. Yet it seems to have the full approval of the cabinet.

The diplomatic sphere revealed by the Rwandan case shows an institution that is both highly political, where diplomats espouse the dominant position of the authorities without distance or reservation, and an administration that is impervious to critical knowledge, including that of research or even that produced within the perimeter of the MAE, such as the analyses of the CAP.

The follow-up in the dominant position of the authorities is demonstrated by the general absence of alternative recommendations. One has to look in great detail at certain TDs, notably those of DFRA New York, to detect a divergence of appreciation. Diplomats in post seem to mechanically obey the instructions of the Department, whose main transmission channel is the “Diplomacy TD.” Few diplomats make recommendations contrary to the advice of the Quai or question some of the intellectual expectations of the policy decided in Rwanda. Former ambassador to Kampala, Yannick Gérard, is part of this small cohort. Some of his diplomatic telegrams written during Operation Turquoise, to which he was attached as ambassador, are very firm, even threatening to resign.

7.2.6 Ideological extremism at the SGDN, the MMC and the EMP from the summer of 1994

7.2.6.1 THE SGDN OR THE RPF ENEMY THESIS

At a time when the genocide of the Tutsi has been recognized and an international criminal tribunal is in the process of being set up to judge the perpetrators, the SGDN is pursuing a form of ideological warfare and communication against the RPF. This service, which is attached to the Prime Minister, therefore communicates an official position of the highest order. The anti-RPF obsession is pronounced, even when the new regime, through the defeat inflicted on the Rwandan Armed Forces, managed *in extremis* to stop the genocide before it decimated all the Tutsi of Rwanda and the Hutu democrats. Before the damning memo of 5 October 1994, which can be questioned in terms of its impact on the decision to exclude Rwanda from the Biarritz summit, two documents produced by the SGDN from May and June 1994 show very oriented analyses on the subject. This service of the Prime Minister adopted maximalist positions during and after the genocide.

The May 1994 report, signed by Olivier Tramond, analyzes the “Great Lakes Region: the origins of intercommunity antagonism.”⁶⁸³ It barely takes into account knowledge acquired about the genocide.

A second report from May also deals with the African Great Lakes Region. It mentions the “risk of regional extension of the Rwandan conflict.”⁶⁸⁴ It puts forward a high-risk solution, which the government will rule out, “support for the Rwandan interim authorities, finally, could certainly prolong the conflict but would constitute the only chance to give the Hutu majority the means to protect itself against complete control of power by the RPF.”⁶⁸⁵ This “support for the Rwandan interim authorities”, insists the author, “would be the option most in line with the defense of French interests for the entire zone because of the risks of regional extension of the Rwandan crisis.” The anti-RPF obsession, the focus on “French interests” is unfolding at a time when humanity is witnessing the reality of genocide. But the conceptual frameworks that have fixed the French intellectual doctrine are still at work regardless of the reality.

The “French Humanitarian Operation in Rwanda: Commitment and Perspective” by the same lieutenant-colonel is dated 28 June, 1994⁶⁸⁶. There is no mention of genocide, only of “massacres.” Attention is once again focused on the IRG. It expects to “take advantage of a French intervention that would make the concentrations of displaced Hutu populations safe and benefit from humanitarian aid.”⁶⁸⁷ The issue of maintaining a strong French influence in Africa is underlined. It is conditional on the respect of the “letter” of the Turquoise mission: “to limit inter-ethnic violence.” The reality of the genocide is invisible.

*The humanitarian operation entailed numerous military and political risks, which could lead, depending on the worst-case scenario, to a hasty withdrawal or, on the contrary, to the French contingent becoming bogged down. It is also a revealing test of the limits of European community policy towards Africa. But its success would be proof that France remains a major player in the international community, especially in the eyes of the Africans.*⁶⁸⁸

*The French intervention must remain within the letter of its humanitarian mission to limit inter-ethnic violence before the deployment of the reinforced UNAMIR.*⁶⁸⁹

Finally, on 5 October 1994, the SGDN published a report on the “Future of Rwanda: priorities for reconstruction.”⁶⁹⁰ It was an indictment aimed at marginalizing post-genocide Rwanda in the international sphere, or at least in the French sphere of influence:

It does not seem appropriate for France, given the Franco-Rwandan dispute, to consider resuming bilateral relations in the short term. On the other hand, France, in order to remain a stakeholder in Rwanda, could commit itself within a multilateral framework (EU), but with conditions relating to the control of the use of this assistance.⁶⁹¹

The conclusion appears more measured. It does, however, demand that Rwanda provide guarantees as a condition for the aid that may be given to it. At that time, Rwanda was an immense open-air cemetery where 800,000 to 1 million Tutsis and Hutu democrats had been exterminated, where RPF reprisals and deaths from hunger, exhaustion and cholera still numbered several hundred thousand. The fact is recognized but does not enter into the logic of the SGDN redactor's argument. The cognitive block, the ideological blindness are obvious.

Rwanda is a country that is bled dry and ruined, whose leadership, despite its apparent good will, seems unprepared to govern and administer the country. This is why the new authorities in Kigali are turning to the international community to meet the challenge of reconstruction. In this context, France, despite its poor image in the eyes of the Kigali authorities, will probably be called upon to contribute within a multilateral framework (EU). This commitment, which certainly deserves to be made, must however be accompanied by conditions relating to the control of the use of the funds paid out.⁶⁹²

In February 1995, Olivier Tramadon wrote a new report establishing a “an inventory 10 months after the civil war.”⁶⁹³ The anti-RPF relentlessness is redoubled. The report mentions the “totalitarian drift of the Kigali regime.”⁶⁹⁴ An opening is conceded: “France can, however, continue to implement a policy of stabilization in the sub-region, it still has the capacity to do so, particularly thanks to the positive effects of Operation ‘Turquoise’ in this area last year.”⁶⁹⁵ This theme of the “totalitarian” RPF pre-existed in EMP memos between 1990 and 1994, and it is also found in a memo by General Huchon, former deputy of General Quesnot who became head of the MMC at the Ministry of Cooperation.⁶⁹⁶

7.2.6.2 THE STRATEGIC THINKING OF THE MMC IN 1994

On 5 July 1994, the head of the MMC sent a report to the Minister of Cooperation entitled “RWANDA-

Reassessment of our strategy.”⁶⁹⁷ Starting with a reminder of the “principles” set out at the Franco-African summits in La Baule and Libreville,⁶⁹⁸ General Huchon mentions “the Ugandan army offensive in October 1990”, a presentation that contradicts verified information on the RPF origin of the attack and the low level of NRA participation. He then notes the rapid democratization of Rwanda at the initiative of President Habyarimana, “faster than in many other African countries” and indicates how “the pro-RPF evolution of our politics reinforced the influence of the extremists to the detriment of the moderate majority. The results were inevitable.” Before elaborating “a new long-term strategy on RWANDA,” General Huchon sets out certain facts, in particular that “before the Ugandan Tutsi attack, the different components of the Rwandan population coexisted normally,” “that all the demilitarized territories entrusted to the UN forces were handed over to the RPF,” that “the RPF advance was accompanied by serious abuses, comparable to those observed in the government zone (CEMA memo of 2 July),” adding: “What about a French, international and UN protest?” The first two points are contrary to the truth, while the third is based on the findings of the RPF massacres, most of which, on the contrary, attest to the fact that they are “not in any way comparable”⁶⁹⁹ to the massacres committed in the government zone. By this date, and since 16 May for France, the qualification of genocide has been retained for the anti-Tutsi massacres, or at least the word genocide has been uttered by France, as explained in Chapter 4 and as mentioned in Part 3 of this chapter.

The head of the MMC pursues analyses that amount to a denunciation of the RPF and a criticism of France’s abandonment of the Rwandan armed forces. He indirectly advocated supplying the FAR with ammunition and continuing the war:

The Rwandan population “votes with its feet” and flees en masse from the RPF “liberators.” The government zone is the refuge zone. The zone conquered by the RPF was emptied of its population (BOUTROS-GHALI declaration - Cf. TD DFRA NEW YORK 2716 of 2 June). French and international reaction? The positioning of TURQUOISE on GOMA and BUKAVU has blocked all supplies to the FAR who are running out of ammunition while the RPF is consuming large quantities of artillery ammunition (origin?). We have completed the encirclement of RWANDA (Who benefits?).

The critical memo insists on the impasse constituted by “humanitarianism”⁷⁰⁰ and especially on France’s alignment with the RPF and the consequences of this policy. It calls for the “decoupling of our policy from that of the RPF” in order to be able to return, “as soon as possible, to the objective of a democratic State for Rwanda,⁷⁰¹ in accordance with the respected tradition of our country”:

From all these elements, it is clear that, despite the warnings, the current policy line has produced the predictable catastrophic consequences, starting with hundreds of thousands of deaths. The concessions made to the RPF have only strengthened its power and ambitions, as has always been the case with totalitarian Marxist movements. The continuation of this policy can only aggravate the tragedy of the Rwandans and further tarnish the image of FRANCE among African leaders.

General Huchon’s comments therefore indicate the existence of “warnings.” General Huchon also repeated the argument regularly used at the EMP - where he held the position of deputy army officer - that a retreat on Rwanda would cause irreparable damage to French alliances in Africa, condemning its entire African policy since decolonization. In particular, he pleaded for a “recovery of our communication, whose goals are ambiguous and whose effects are deplorable for our image,” and for the clear designation of France’s adversary, or even “enemy,” the RPF, whose crimes must be severely denounced.⁷⁰² He concluded by insisting on “the three pillars” of France’s necessary reflection “for the future Rwanda”:

- *the popular majority is Hutu*
- *the RPF will always be our adversary (enemy?) because it is Marxist and totalitarian, and therefore irreparably opposed to our democratic and humanist culture*
- *our political objective for the future RWANDA is of direct interest to African leaders. They wait, observe and judge. What is our plan?*⁷⁰³

The reflection proposed by the head of the Military Cooperation Mission seems to have reached the political echelons, since a distinctly RPF policy is being imposed in France, the founding act being the Biarritz speech by the head of state, François Mitterrand. However, the question can be reversed: was it the political level that imposed such a reflection on the administrative sphere represented here by General

Huchon? There is no record of any pressure from the political authorities on the head of the MMC to formulate such analyses to the Minister of Cooperation, Michel Roussin.⁷⁰⁴

General Huchon clearly wanted to define and impose, including through a certain rhetoric of threat, the policy that France, according to him, should conduct with regard to future Rwanda, namely to repeat the policy of 1990-1993 of engagement against the RPF, this time without the opening towards peace that the march towards the Arusha Accords had represented.

The genesis of General Huchon's interpretations goes back to his time in the EMP, whose chief acclimatized the expression "Khmer noirs" in his memos to the President of the Republic (and even in exchanges at the Select Defense Committee). General Quesnot achieved a perfect synthesis of the "Marxist" and "totalitarian" characters.

At the same time, General Huchon was fascinated by a "Belgian article on the RPF," which was in fact an indictment of the vice-president of the Christian Democrat International, André Louis, who was adept at denouncing the RPF and its strategy for taking power in Rwanda. For this political leader, the question arises as to whether the RPF is "a Marxist movement." What is certain, André Louis continues, "is that this movement has assimilated and made its own the Marxist technology of conquering power and that it has mastered it in a remarkable way" thanks to its military strength and the control it allows over a portion of national territory, thanks to its support in European and North American opinion with financial means and supremacy in the media debate, thanks to its fight against democratization and in favor of the "disintegration of the political and administrative structure of the country." The RPF is thus accused of "reviving the Hutu/Tutsi antagonism, which President Habyarimana had managed to extinguish completely" and of an "operation 'Human Rights' [...] conducted in a professionally impeccable manner." The conclusions of André Louis insist on the need to confront the RPF at the ballot box and to defy peace at all costs, because "it is to give the RPF a veto right against democracy."

This indictment, which portrays the RPF as a movement with a Marxist strategy that is an enemy of democracy, is addressed to an "advisor" at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁷⁰⁵

On the accompanying “Presidency of the Republic” letterhead seen by ND⁷⁰⁶ and directed to the DAM for “Mme Boivineau,” the author writes: “The Belgian article on the RPF is the best I have read so far on this subject. Its conclusions are worth reflecting on as a way out of the crisis.” General Huchon appears once again to be very involved in defining a policy rather than executing one that has been decided by the political authorities, and he is trying to win over diplomats he considers likely to be loyal to his cause, by means that are not very regulatory.

The hypothesis that General Huchon, who became head of the MMC in October 1993, had a strong autonomy in defining a radically anti-RPF French position that was totally silent on the reality of the anti-Tutsi persecution, and that, on the contrary, charged the Front with responsibility for the massacres observed in Rwanda, is reinforced by a memo dated 8 June, 1994 “for the attention of the Director of the Cabinet (under cover of Mr. Jehanne⁷⁰⁷).” Its subject is “Rwanda - Concept of employment of UNAMIR 2.”⁷⁰⁸ The importance of the memo and its sensitive nature led to its being carefully reproduced. The head of the MMC relies on a review of a series of DFRA New York TDs (2716, 2717, 2809) to state that “UNAMIR 2 will, like UNAMIR 1, be designed to best support the RPF.” He went to great lengths to dispute the UN Secretary General’s information on the responsibility of the interim government and government forces for the massacres. He insists on the duplicity of UNAMIR, with the systematically pro-RPF strategy of General Dallaire⁷⁰⁹ and the ingratitude of the United Nations towards France. General Huchon called for a policy of rupture without concession:

In the field of logistics, here again, France is being asked to equip forces that will serve the RPF strategy through the UN command. We have already contributed in 1992 to the equipment of the GOMN, whose activity is very oriented and has allowed the easy conquest of the so-called demilitarized zones by the RPF. Is it not still possible to re-evaluate the consequences of our diplomacy in RWANDA? Can we still support and subsidize the destabilizing action of General DALLAIRE in this French-speaking sub-region? We will soon officially reach the 500,000th death.⁷¹⁰ At what number will we stop?⁷¹¹

We note that the head of the MMC, whose responsibility is to obey the political authorities and apply their decisions, chooses

to influence the policies conducted in Rwanda, and even to define and impose them by means of writings that are highly offensive in both form and content. This memo is addressed to a correspondent whose name or functions are unknown, accompanied by a business card “from Major General Jean-Pierre Huchon, Head of the Military Cooperation Mission” where it is written: “Contrary to appearances, we had not consulted each other yes, yes! Regardless of the deliberately acidic tone, I believe that an effort towards the UN in the interest of rebalancing is constant. I spoke about it to C. Boivineau who is doing what is necessary in New York.” On the memo itself, General Huchon writes the following : “We raised this issue at the ‘Africa’ meeting this morning. The problem has not escaped anyone’s notice and everyone is doing their best. But it is never useless to be fully informed. This is what we are now.”

On 26 October, 1994, the head of MMC sent another memo “to the attention of the Minister (under cover of the Defense Advisor).” Its subject is entitled: “Rwanda - program ‘La Marche du Siècle’” (Rwanda-“The March of the Century’ program) and an attachment is included: “Directive of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of 22 October, 1992 (Extract).”⁷¹² The tone of the memo resembles a form of ultimatum addressed to the Minister of Cooperation, still Michel Roussin at the time. General Huchon questioned the policy followed by the government and contrasted it with the “anger” and “concern” of some military and civilian officials. He presented himself as the defender of the “French military,” victims of “Parisian political rivalries.” The memo expresses the risk of sedition, and even exposes the threat of it in the event that the political authorities do not assume their responsibilities. Among the possible actions, the memo mentions a leak of documents. The author even seems to associate himself with such eventualities in order to use all his determination to put an end to the French “pro-RPF” policy.⁷¹³

The program “The March of the Century” broadcast by FR3 on 21 September triggered a major movement of anger among the military and civilians involved in our foreign actions. I received numerous testimonies from exasperated cadres who felt defamed and insufficiently defended. The essential aspects of these statements are as follows:

- 1. Anger of former RWANDA staff who consider that they are insufficiently defended by the government authorities and who do not understand the silence,*

the “guilty complacency” about RPF abuses since 1990 (cf. the French support for the Security Council resolution on abuses after 6 April and not before). The comments are precise and incisive, particularly on the part of the police officers (who are in a better position than others to know about them).

2. Strong concern on the part of the development workers currently serving in equivalent missions who expect to be “thrown to the dogs” if the country in which they are serving, despite their work, falls into ethnic confrontation.

3. Even more serious is the widespread feeling that they are being used as scapegoats for Parisian political rivalries. Several civilian and military cadres (claiming to be well-informed) make a direct link between the appointment by government authorities of Jean-Marie CAVADA to high responsibilities in a new TV channel and the benevolence (encouragement?) he received for this tendentious program clearly oriented against the French military.

4. Several civilian and military cadres reminded me that they hold or have held, by virtue of their position, all or part of the governmental instructions defining the policy in Rwanda month after month. They expect everyone to assume their responsibilities. They emphasize that the delivery of the main equipment was subject to CIEEMG procedures and therefore authorized by the various ministries with the power to veto.

I am attaching, by way of example, one of the extracts from these directives that was actually found in the Mission’s archives. It is signed.⁷¹⁴ I draw your attention to the fact that the distribution of these directives, like that of many others, was significant and that no degree of confidentiality is mentioned on these documents. I believe, in conclusion, that it is urgent to convince the Ministry, which has a monopoly on government communication on this issue, to stop this abnormal and unworthy drift. The risk is close to seeing a polemic appear in the press, generated by a self-defense reflex by cadres who are accused unjustly and with impunity, as was the case in the Gendarmerie in 1989 in the affair of anonymous letters. Who would benefit from this?

The change in policy that seems to be taking place at this time, by which France is getting closer to the new authorities in Kigali, is thus violently denounced in a memo to the Minister which it is legitimate to question. The tone of violence and threat is significant. As we know, General Huchon strongly reproached the political authorities for a policy that would be quickly buried. At the Élysée, General Quesnot was active for his part until the presidential decision to keep Rwanda out of the Biarritz summit.

7.2.6.3 THE EMP AND THE CONTINUATION OF THE ANTI-RPF WAR

In contrast to the totally incomplete archives of the EMP, the abundant archives of the African Affairs Advisor document the role and engagement of the Chief of Staff in the weeks between the end of Operation Turquoise and the Biarritz summit, which was marked by the absence of Rwanda among the invited African countries and the speech of President François Mitterrand attributing a second genocide to the RPF. The action developed by the Prime Minister to exercise his authority over Operation Turquoise, in accordance with Article 5 of the Constitution, resulted in a relative loss of the operational powers conquered by the EMP on the Rwandan terrain.

General Quesnot tried to influence the organization of the Biarritz summit. A memo dated 24 October, 1994, explained to the President of the Republic the reasons why Rwanda should not be invited. The text is reproduced below in full:

The question of inviting the President of Rwanda to the Biarritz Summit was raised (in particular by those on the left who feared the reactions of the media - Guy Penne - and by those who used them to their best advantage to combat France's African policy - humanitarian organizations, the Socialist Party).

1° Arguments in favor of an invitation to the new Rwandan president

It is necessary to turn the page¹⁵ and not give the impression that France is "sulking" after the RPF's "victory." The RPF has won, it must be dealt with.

The Rwandan government is paralyzed in the face of its task: to rebuild the country and reconcile Rwandans. Not to help it is to increase the risk of a new ethnic war, of new massacres.¹⁶ Under pressure from France and the African presidents present in Biarritz, the Rwandan authorities should make an effort to encourage the return of refugees (2.5 million).

2° Arguments against :

The RPF and the Rwandan government, despite appeasing declarations, remain very hostile to France and in little hurry to establish relations with French-speaking Africa. They have not officially expressed the wish to be present in Biarritz; apparently the Rwandan PM, Mr. Faustin Twagiramungu, is very much in demand, as well as the Rwandan President, Mr. Pasteur Bizimungu. But the real "boss," General Kagame, is not interested and is looking for openings from the Belgians, Israelis, Libyans and Anglo-Saxons.

The presence of Rwanda in Biarritz risks "diverting" the summit and making the Rwandan crisis the sole concern of the media.

The RPF dominates the government where the Hutu representatives (President and PM) have little weight. Today, the RPF's cause does not seem so pure. Amnesty

International has just denounced the massacres committed against thousands of Hutu civilians by RPF troops (see Le Monde article).

Finally, the Arusha Accords are no longer a reference in Kigali. It is a Tutsi military regime that is being set up in Rwanda.

In any case, we have asked the Quai d'Orsay (which is hesitant) to let us know its recommendations. At any rate, the Rwandans should not be invited without first consulting some African heads of State (Diouf, Bongo, Bédié, Compaoré ... sic).⁷¹⁷

"Highly recommended" wrote Hubert Védrine. François Mitterrand replied: "No," accentuated by two lines below. A half-sheet of paper was stapled to the memo, a document signed by Bruno Delaye with a note from Hubert Védrine: "General Quesnot is very hostile to a possible invitation."⁷¹⁸

Previously, the new deputy to the EMP, Colonel Henri Bentégeat, had sent a document on the RPF to Foreign Affairs, accompanied by one of his predecessor's usual cards. This communication seemed to indicate a change of direction for 14 rue de l'Élysée.⁷¹⁹

7.2.7 1998. Setbacks and advances in connection with the Quilès Mission

7.2.7.1 AT THE SGDN AND THE DAS

While no document attests to the intellectual production of the SGDN in 1998, in the context of the preparation and accompaniment of the Parliamentary Information Mission, the activities of the DAS are more visible.

The *Délégation aux affaires stratégiques* was responsible, along with the Armed Forces Staff, for monitoring the "informal hearings of French military personnel by investigators of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)," according to the title of the file drawn up on 23 December 1997.⁷²⁰ Colonel Sartre, the former head of the Northern Group of Turquoise, was in charge of this on the side of the DAS, while his alter ego for the EMA was Colonel Poncet, the former commander of Operation Amaryllis. He notes:

During the preparatory session, Commander Gillier and Chief Warrant Officer Prunghaud mentioned the existence of important documents collected by the COS, including accounts, lists of names of alleged perpetrators and organizers of genocide, as well as photos and videotapes of the massacres. It would be interesting to see these documents with a view to providing some of them in due course to the CTR as a concrete sign of France's willingness to cooperate with the tribunal.⁷²¹

The same Colonel Sartre, from the DAS, was asked to analyze the report of the Belgian Senate's investigation, a 400-page document made public on 6 December, 1997. The analysis carried out by the DAS expert, in the form of a "memo to the director,"⁷²² had three aims, which are explained in the introduction. From the outset, the approach is critical, without concession:

1. To present the main conclusions of the investigation

Generally speaking, the inquiry is solid, lucid and without self-complacency with regard to the actions of the Belgian civilian and military authorities; it is bitter but without acrimony with regard to the international community, and in particular the United States; it presents weaknesses with regard to the causes, the environment, the planning and the course of the genocide.

In particular, while it clearly establishes that numerous indications were provided, as early as 1992, of the risk of large-scale organized massacres, it proves incapable, a posteriori, of transforming these data into evidence of genocide planning, for lack of irrefutable elements that could only be collected on the ground, which is now inaccessible.

2. Assessing the implicit or explicit accusations of France or French actors

The commission is extremely discreet on this point, and it can be said that France is almost absent from the Belgian Senate's reading of the Rwandan crisis; the most serious accusations against our country are cautiously left to a French writer (Gérard Prunier).

3. Anticipating a similar commission that could be established by one of the French parliamentary chambers

At first glance, such an inquiry would certainly put the French politico-military decision-making structures of the Rwandan crisis to the test, which at the time had undergone numerous derogatory procedures; it would encounter the same difficulties as the Belgian inquiry in establishing the facts that took place in Rwanda, due to the lack of investigative capacity on the spot; collaboration with the ICTR would perhaps allow us to take a few steps further than the Belgian senators.⁷²³

This is followed by precise developments and appendices of nearly twenty pages. They analyze the Belgian report, step by step, beginning with its introduction, which is based on the work of the researcher (and actor in the dossier) Gérard Prunier⁷²⁴ and a reminder of an international initiative to evaluate the emergency assistance provided to Rwanda in 1994.⁷²⁵ Colonel Sartre expresses reservations about these two documents and specifies that two other sources were mobilized by the Belgian Senate: "We must emphasize the extensive quotations from the various works and hearings of Professor Reyntjens and

especially of Mr. Ndiaye, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Rwanda, both of whom have impartial views and who clearly describe the dynamics of the genocidal spiral.”

On the Arusha Accords, Colonel Sartre notes that “the report fails to emphasize the logic of conflict prevention, which at the time was considered justified, that animated this government, as well as the French leaders, the OAU and the rest of the international community: to provide security to a regime that, in exchange, would become democratic.”⁷²⁶ On the establishment of UNAMIR, Colonel Sartre notes how “the report shows in a striking manner the extreme weakening of UNAMIR’s mandate.”⁷²⁷ And he concludes strongly:

This passage is truly pathetic. The report could end there, because the fate of UNAMIR and Rwanda is sealed: both are launched into a perilous undertaking, for which the international community denies them the moral and military means. In order to carry out a conflict prevention task that is unanimously supported, including by the parties involved, the Secretary General is reduced to accepting impossible conditions for its execution. One might even think that it was the fear of being denied all means that led him to minimize, or even hide, the risks of genocide that would have discouraged the few potential contributors.⁷²⁸

With regard to the application of the Arusha Accords and the assessment of the deterioration of the political situation, Colonel Sartre insists on two points, which he believes to be very important, namely France’s exact position on these agreements and its ability to take action on genocide alerts. The officer foresees that a French parliamentary inquiry could open a necessary reflection on the “alerts” for risks of genocide:

France is curiously virtually absent from this analysis, apart from the assessment (quoted by Mr. Ndiayé) that it “was on the defensive, even more so than President Habyarimana himself”; by this the report seems to mean that the Belgian government, rightly according to it, was banking on a success, against all odds, of the democratization process, even though France and President Habyarimana no longer believed in it. The report does not indicate whether France was lucid or cynical. In addition to its substantive interest, this paragraph shows, from the perspective of a French parliamentary inquiry, how easy it is, in the post-genocide context, to find evidence of warning signs that should have been taken into account, and how difficult it is, on the contrary, to obtain evidence that helps to understand the reasons that led to their being overlooked.⁷²⁹

The DAS analyst continues his reflection “with regard to the inevitable questioning of what will be stigmatized as the blindness of our own technical assistance, concerning the preparation of the genocide,” addressing the problem of “undue hopes founded on the warning role that constitutes a technical military assistance mechanism in general”⁷³⁰:

Going beyond the Rwanda operation, the report implicitly poses the problem of the preparation of a peace force in terms of understanding the situation and its social roots, at all levels of responsibility. In the same general vein, this paragraph is also interesting because of the interest of a national commission, three years after the fact, in the flow of information (and its interpretation) between a force under UN command (and therefore theoretically under its sole authority) and the HCN of the contributing country, theoretically outside the hierarchical chain. Responsibility is therefore sought for the interpretation of information exchanges that had almost no legitimacy. Beyond this problem of legitimacy, it raises the question of the respective roles, in terms of security intelligence, of the military deployed on site and the strategic intelligence services of the contributing nation, as well as of the embassy.

Finally, Colonel Sartre’s memo, prepared for the DAS, addresses the issue - not of the Tutsi genocide, which is attested and recognized - but of the difficulty of going beyond a planning analysis grid. The Belgian report highlights the following elements: “the incitement to ethnic hatred, in particular by RTL; the wide distribution of weapons; the existence of trained militias; the speed with which the massacres were launched; the circulation of lists of people to be arrested or killed.”⁷³¹

The redactor notes the difficulty of the parliamentary commission in “establishing, *a posteriori*, the materiality of the planning of the genocide” even though it “has numerous warning elements that seem to show that this plan had been anticipated for nearly two years by certain officials or certain authorities who had made it known in terms that should not have been ignored.”⁷³² At this stage of his analysis, Colonel Sartre considers the possible internal investigations that France could launch into its own involvement in Rwanda, and into its responsibilities, possible or real, in the genocidal spiral, with absolute indifference to the indications of a genocide in preparation. A list of names of presumed genocidaires, given in an appendix to the report,⁷³³ could be the subject of “an internal French investigation, in order

to determine as clearly as possible which French officials, having been in regular contact with the persons implicated, could be criticized, at least in the media, for complicity in the planning of the genocide.”⁷³⁴ He already anticipates the questions and asks that the facts be exposed. A demand for transparency emerges in these pages, beginning with a process of clarification of the many flaws in France’s involvement in Rwanda. As a military officer attached to the DAS, Colonel Sartre only considers this path, which combines honor with truth. From this stems some very pertinent analyses established a few years after the event and which, until then, had been kept silent or nearly so by the institution:

*The report puts forward a hypothesis on French blindness, which it attributes to the fact that our country “focused primarily on intelligence on the RPF, which it considered an adversary.” In the event of a French parliamentary inquiry, this point will no doubt be analyzed in detail. The argument put forward is certainly correct, but it is the entire chain of assessment of the situation that will then be under scrutiny, as well as the numerous derogatory provisions to which the official system was subject at the time.*⁷³⁵

In this way, Colonel Sartre proposes to question the link that would exist between the failure of French policy in Rwanda and the inability of its leaders to conceive of the risks of genocide. In other words, such a policy of blindness would have the ultimate consequence of depriving the collective intelligence of a country of its critical and even cognitive faculties. The observation is appalling, and it is made by one of the servants of the State that has failed. He restores in this sense his capacity to think and to act, provided however that Colonel Sartre is heard, that his report is read.

The officer chooses at this stage to pose the central question of the prevention and the fight against genocide, a question that concerns the cognitive capacity and the political responsibility to assume established risks of genocide, or to consider them as such but to decide on higher priorities:

The [Belgian] commission reports at least twenty documents at the disposal of the Belgian authorities that it seems should have been sufficient to alert the authorities of that country. It seems to show that the Belgian authorities, in particular Minister Claes, were not insensitive to them. But the certainty that the Arusha process should not be jeopardized prevailed and broke down all defenses, in New York as in Brussels. [...] The same is true for

*France and for the entire international community. We know that Mr. Balladur was the first Western leader to dare to use the term “genocide” several weeks after it had begun.*⁷³⁶

On 17 January, 1998, the DAS submitted a “memo to the Minister”⁷³⁷ of Defense, Alain Richard. The redactor of this memo was still Patrice Sartre, as the mention on the first page attests. The purpose of this memo was to prepare for the Minister’s meeting with the President of the Republic, Jacques Chirac, on the subject of the “Rwanda ICT.” It is summarized in one page. The colonel wishes to speak the language of truth to the minister:

*Within the framework of the preparation of a position vis-à-vis the requests of the ICT Yugoslavia, the Ministry of Defense was led to evaluate the legal, media and political perspectives opened by the requests of the ICT Rwanda. This initial review made it possible to establish a timetable for France’s military action in this country from 1990 to 1994. It shows that two points are still poorly understood, due to their complexity, and deserve to be examined in greater depth in order to assess the vulnerabilities that they could conceal for our policy: the detailed action of our military cooperation and the problem of arms and munitions deliveries.*⁷³⁸

In early 1998, the DAS commissioned a study from the Algerian expert Ghazi Hidouci⁷³⁹ entitled “African strategies and international actions for a stabilization of Central Africa and the Great Lakes: what place for France?” A meeting was organized by the Sub-Saharan Africa Office of the DAS on 9 July, 1998, to which several officials from the Ministry of Defense were invited.⁷⁴⁰ The expert’s presentation of the fate of the Rwandan Tutsi forced into exile after their country’s independence seemed to lend credence to a form of guilt on the part of the victims, who were accused of being responsible for the ethnicization of the Great Lakes region, particularly Burundi. This situation is more the responsibility of the Rwandan aggressors of the Tutsi whom they massacred and forced into exile because they were born Tutsi. After a reminder of Belgian responsibilities in the area of ethnicization in Rwanda, Ghazi Hidouci writes:

*The precipitous proclamation of independence was preceded by the first ethnic cleansing in the name of the “social revolution,” causing thousands of deaths and the exodus to Burundi of nearly 500,000 Tutsi without the tutelary power, which was at the origin of the abuses, being moved.*⁷⁴¹ *The displaced will spread ethnic logic in Burundi, which until then had been spared, and will spread mistrust*

*all the more surely since, in the absence of work opportunities in the hills, they will settle en masse in Bujumbura. Fear will then invade the shores of the Great Lakes for a long time.*⁷⁴²

The analysis of the years 1990-1993 emphasizes the “horror of the massacres” committed in Burundi following the coup d’état of 22 October, 1993, leading to an exodus of 700,000 new Hutu refugees to Rwanda. The expert called in by the DAS noted that “the extremists of both countries will be practically organically linked to the Rwandan army in the future, as the RPF guerrillas and the Ugandan army were before.” According to Ghazi Hidouci, from 1994 onwards, a murderous logic was put in place in Rwanda as in Burundi:

To the estimated 750,000 dead, a new category will be added, that of the “displaced” and “dispersed” on the hills, because the countryside will experience an effective ethnic separation that the army will devise to protect some and control the others, permanently infiltrated by the guerrillas. This logic, which is sustained by instability and permanent trench warfare, will eventually reach Bujumbura in 1996, which will in turn be emptied of its Hutu. Lies and impunity will have basically triumphed without the international community trying to follow through on the implications of its support for democracy.

The report’s conclusion with respect to Rwanda is uncompromising. It is in line with a general analysis that, however, erases the specificities of the “Rwandan crisis” until the final collapse. The responsibilities of the Western powers are judged very severely, in particular because they refuse to assume them or even to recognize them. It is true, Ghazi Hidouci argues, that they must deal with “totalitarian powers and clandestine oppositions” whose nature he does not specify:

The Western powers putting forward the UN administration will get used to swallowing all the bogwash and dodging the responsible political implications, arguing for non-intervention. They will nevertheless continue to pursue all economic interests, especially by instrumentalizing the channels of military assistance. The dominant values lose all sense. The totalitarian powers and the clandestine oppositions will immediately learn the consequences. They align themselves with cynical positions of the fait accompli and will learn to rely on their own capacities in uncertain and diffuse paths of reciprocal destabilization, using all the resources of the criminalization of practices, abroad and at home. This internal and regional disconnection is one of the striking facts of recent years.

With this analytical grid in place, Ghazi Hidouci returns to the final catastrophe in Rwanda, insisting on “the toll of the genocide”:

The international intervention in 1993 in Rwanda, following the effective offensive of the RPF, was to impose the democratization of the regime, the associated exercise of power during the transition and especially the merger of the NRA and that of the RPF and the massive dismissal of the military in both camps. Moreover, under pressure from its own bureaucracy, which was suffering the effects of the economic crisis, and trapped in the rigid conditionalities of the IMF, the Habyarimana regime preferred to procrastinate, to gain time and to wait for favourable moments to go back on its promises. It will be overtaken, following the tragic events by its own troops, which will have exacerbated the criminalization and precipitated the all-out war against the RPF, with one million victims, two million refugees, and 400,000 “displaced persons” paying the price of the genocide that will lead to the final assault and the victory of the RPF.⁷⁴³

7.2.7.2 IN THE “RWANDA UNIT” OF THE THREE MINISTRIES

THE REVIVAL OF THE HYPOTHESIS OF AN ASSAULT ON THE GENOCIDAIRES

Accompanying the work of the Parliamentary Information Mission, responding to its requests for archives and preparation of hearings, the three “Rwanda units” set up within the ministries concerned also worked to establish the “points of vulnerability.” To what end? The refusal of the office of the National Assembly to grant the Research Commission’s request for access to the Mission’s archives makes it impossible to answer. The fact remains that the archives of these “Rwanda units” contain “vulnerability studies” such as the one devoted to Operation Amaryllis.⁷⁴⁴ The undated document⁷⁴⁵ presents the “Mission” (I) and the “Conduct” (II) outlines the “brief course of action” (III).⁷⁴⁶ Then come two final sections, “Major Actions <->Problems” and “Points of Vulnerability.”

The report notes the issue of the instructions to “observe the greatest discretion [...] with regard to the media” and the problem posed by the evacuation route with the “possibility (of) observing massacres.”⁷⁴⁷ It mentions the “particular problem: the recuperation of 147 expatriates at the Don Bosco school (Belgian parliamentary commission of inquiry).”⁷⁴⁸ The redactor tries to justify the impossibility “for the military observer to guess the extent of the massacres and, *a fortiori*, to conclude that there was a genocide,” especially “in the absence of specific means of situational intelligence - all of which were dedicated to the security of the operation and because of the terrain, the vegetation, the dispersion of

the habitat and the size of the town.” The report adds that “none of the eight journalists present took live shots of the massacres, appeared to detect the genocide, or complained about being kept under supervision.”⁷⁴⁹

The document mentions the “selection of refugees” which does not show any sorting: “all those who wished to were evacuated, without distinction.” Of course, the author immediately adds, “the mission was limited to the evacuation of ‘nationals, first of all French families, then foreign nationals who expressed a desire to do so’. Not only did the regrouping centers receive French and foreign nationals, but also a certain number of Rwandans who felt threatened.”⁷⁵⁰ If one assumes, and this has not been verified due to a lack of access to the MIP archives,⁷⁵¹ that the purpose of the work of the “Rwanda units” was to know everything about the files in order to anticipate what parliamentarians might find out, and that, moreover, these files, although unclassified, were intended to remain confidential, it is possible to believe that the analyses presented address the substance of the files.

A final element emerges from the Amaryllis set of documents in 1998. The file discusses the possibility that combat units would have had to confront the genocidaires, mentioning the protective force of combat companies in contrast to the weaknesses of UNAMIR. In the words of an officer who was in Kigali at the time of the attack and at the outbreak of the genocide, the hypothesis of responding with force is “the big question”:⁷⁵²

Even with a broader mandate, the operation’s limited resources (three reinforced companies and 500 men, without combat vehicles) divided between the airport (two companies) and the assembly centers (one company with five sections) would not have allowed for an effective intervention capacity without substantial reinforcement. Noroît had successfully carried out this protection mission for three years (04/10/1990-15/12/1993) with a maximum of 600 men, in support of the FAR.⁷⁵³

7.2.7.3 AT THE “PRE-RWANDA UNIT” OF THE ARMED FORCES GENERAL STAFF. MEMOS FROM COLONEL LE PORT

As head of the “Rwanda unit” at the Ministry of Defense, General Mourgeon obtained from the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, at the time of the creation

of this unit, the assignment to the EMA of a senior officer responsible for preparing memos and organizing the consultation of senior officers mobilized in the Rwandan field in 1990 and 1994. This officer was Marine Colonel Armel Le Port (replaced on his retirement by Colonel André Ronde). The officer drew up several files on behalf of the "Rwanda unit" of the Ministry of Defense, some of which were related to requests from one of the two rapporteurs of the Parliamentary Information Mission, Deputy Bernard Cazeneuve. The Research Commission found two of these files in the EMA archives deposited with the SHD and one in a belated deposit acquired in the course of its work. Three of them are handwritten but accompanied by standard EMA "analysis reports" indicating that they are officially part of the work produced by the Armed Forces Staff. The Commission was struck by the acuity of understanding and the courage of the statement made by the redactor, Le Port.

- Report dated 20 March, 1998,⁷⁵⁴ subject: "Rwanda meeting: update on investigations."

This document provides answers to the questions raised in the previous file, and probably in other files that it has not been possible to locate. It is structured in two points: "I. Year 1994 (ICTR)," "II. Previous cases."

Subject Meeting Rwanda: Update on Investigations

1 Year 1994 (ICTR)

11 Military assistance to Rwa in 1994: AD agreement

12 Amaryllis: AD agreement

Issues raised :

ammunition to FAR: NO (Cussac, Poncet, Maurin, Balch) Remainder Ri on the 9th: impossible on the 1st plane

Ri on departure (Senegalese accusation UNAMIR -Marchal)

Hutu/Tutsi sorting: NO only the French evacuated Rwa by VAM (394-40 %T 60%H)

Priorities: P1: protect H. family; P2: determine causes of attack against the pdts; P3: evacuate French nationals.

Assassinations 2 gend - list of 120 p established by RPF (Belgian work); 1 gend invstgn on RPF massacres rw in Feb Mar 93 [illegible].

9-10 April 1st aircrafts prepared not by mili but by amba MARLAUD and his coder av CHARON

Relatives H (P+C): 72 p to extr - not found - GIS and RUHENG

14/4 airport (M+B): Belgian mortar attacks for interv [drawing of a triangle] of hostages - end of Belgian evacuation operation (15/4) + Belgian UNAMIR (19/20/4) 9/4 12 ... ? (true?) 2 DGSE remained in K [after] Amaryllisapr 9/4 1200 6 reliable rens between Am and Turq⁷⁵⁵

13 Armaments and MU deliveries [after] ARUSHA See f. DAS: nothing from + customs (DAS)

At least 1 FAR GOMA arms delivery on 6 or 7/7 (B707 cargo from KIN. It is on the other hand false for 18/7: mo[illegible] RPF shooting on GOMA pole - aircraft service (St Ex)

Pt DPSD - 22/3

14 "Turquoise": according to C par miss civ coop: the FAR or ex-FAR were paid by coop in July 94 (from chapter 4123 (trainee?))

2 Previous cases

21 1991 CANOVAS proposes to H (after Rubengeri affair Jan 91)

to mine (???) the virunga Volcanoes region to prevent infiltration by the RPF (pbs: population)

arming of NW militias (RUH-GIS) (which will be done - communal militias (bourgmestres) - MRND militias (Inrerhamwe)

very serious conflict with AD+Lcl Rob (Gnd) (risk of massacres)

22 1992 :

engagement of 105mm2 provided by DAMI 35th RAP c RPF at Byumba in [illegible] col. Delort and Rosier and (? Maurin 26-30/6/92)

6 ob 105+mu supplied by AT (doua defense) + renew Mu in 1993 : date ?

23 1993

232 3 March gang rape in moving vbl of 21st RIMA by 3 marines on prostitute then stick bayonet in vagina. Girl thrown overboard - filed complaint

Noroit provost, alrt by Rwa Gnd, [illegible, probably arrested] the 3 perpetrators

Interv of lcl TR by AD for [illegible] the case. Refusal by CR-DGGN who referred the case to the investigating judge [illegible].

The judge was relieved of jurisdiction over interv Léotard (Fréjus) who had become MINDEF. Mention in margin of this paragraph: DPSD].

231 Feb 1993 French connti on access N Kigali: yes assessment: 1 day [illegible] with Mil fais e Rwai; then dur 2 week by rwa Gend supported in withdrawal by q elt fais (and without flag).

233 assessment after Arusha - 2 schools (2nd sem 93):

DAS advocates withdrawal and equal treatment of H/RPF; support of Gal Mercier AD+DRM insist on the risks in terms of security (militia armt - attacks - arrival of RPF fighters - security of nationals) if Noroit leaves too soon.

The 24 April, 1998 report,⁷⁵⁶ entitled “Rwanda: additional elements,” is also the work of Colonel Armel Le Port. This report is structured in three points: “1. Training and arming Hutu militias,” “2. Participation or presence in the interrogation of prisoners,” “3. Conducting Rwandan affairs.”

1. Training and arming of Hutu militias

Following meetings with Col (GND-R) GALINIE on 21 and 22 April, it appears that there is no known evidence of any such French suggestion to the Rwandan President in 1991. Moreover, the political militias did not officially appear until March 1992 and were only clandestinely armed in the run-up to the Arusha accords (4 August, 1993).

It is nonetheless true that the attacks on Rubengeri (October 1990-January 1991) saw Habyarimana’s active supporters transformed into communal guards, initially armed with machetes (10,000 of them purchased) and placed under the orders of the burgomasters who were affiliated with the MRND.

The GALINIE-CANOVAS conflict (February-June 1991) arose from a difference in appreciation of the potential risks associated with the recruitment of the FAR. In office for three years, the Adn, who had experienced the 1988 massacres in Burundi, felt that it was necessary to recruit a national army, not a mono-ethnic one, and from the President’s region of origin - the NW: Rubengeri-Gisenyi; to do this, an army of 10,000 soldiers by the end of 1991 (instead of 4,000 in October 1990) seemed to be a reasonable objective (the RPF initially had about 3,000 soldiers, then 4,000). Canovas, the FAR EMC advisor, preferred to let the Rwandan command do this, which increased the number of troops to 26,000 from the NW, poorly selected, poorly trained, and unwilling to fight - except with a machete against defenseless Tutsi.

2. Participation or presence in the interrogation of prisoners:

In the “Rwandan culture of massacre,” prisoners are not kept: “we can’t feed our people, we’re not going to feed these people...” Moreover, the interrogation reports were marked: “before dying, the prisoner declared...”

For example, in order to allow the instructors (OPJ, DAMI) to work, the AD had personally negotiated with President H for the survival of 100 prisoners; after three months, he obtained 10!

Under these conditions, the participation of French officials in the interrogations seems to be excluded, even though some of them may have been present or witnesses, particularly in the camps of MUKAMIRA (DAMI) near RUHENGERRI.

3. Conducting Rwandan affairs

*Two vulnerabilities are likely to emerge from the hearings: The VARRET-HUCHON hostility
The “parallel networks” of information and decision-making.*

3.1 *At the EMP, General Huchon “wanted the skin” of the “little statue” who was the only obstacle to the policy of support of the Élysée.*

3.2 *To do this, he needed to get around the obstacle by direct intervention, thanks in particular to the INMARSAT suitcases and to some accomplices within the army. His appointment as head of the MMC only partially simplified his task, because the creation of the COS cut off his network in 1993.*

Telecommunications diagram.

It should be noted that the CEMA, and with him the EMA, “navigated” between these two lines between 1991 and 1993. Then the ship ran its course...

The third report dates from 2 July 1998.⁷⁵⁷ The purpose of this report is to provide “answers to the requests of the Parliamentary Information Mission.” Eight points are dealt with: the SA 16 missile launcher; “the contribution of the FAR to the search for the truth about the Rwandan tragedy”; the SA 16 surface-to-air missiles in use in the Ugandan army; the range of the SA 16; the personnel present at the control tower of the Kigali airport; the Kanombe camp (units, ethnic groups); the infiltration of elements of the RPF battalion from Kigali outside the CDN; the position of the AMT on the evening of 6 April 1994.

7.2.8 Self-critical institutions?

A reflection that began in 1994

7.2.8.1 A LOOK BACK AT THE WIROTH-LE PORT MEMOS

THE BLINDNESS OF THE FRENCH ADMINISTRATION TO RWANDA

With Operation Turquoise barely over, General Wiroth, as mentioned earlier, signed the memo of 29 August, 1994, which reproduced and analyzed the March 1993 report of the International Federation for Human Rights on human rights violations in Rwanda since October 1990, also known as the Carbonare report, after its president and principal author.⁷⁵⁸ The Deputy Director of Strategic Affairs at the Ministry of Defense began by mentioning what he considered to be the major elements of the report. Thus, the general officer emphasized that, according to the report, “the complicity of local authorities is certain” and that “burgomasters, sub-prefects, prefects, unit leaders, police officers, communal administrative officials, forest rangers... contributed to the massacres.”⁷⁵⁹ These initial findings are extended, and the memo mentions that, according to this report, “the

responsibility of the EM is obvious” and that there was a Zero Network planning assassinations with death squads, organized in a circle around the head of State.

In his memo, General Wiroth repeats most of the accusations made against the Rwandan State and army by the FIDH in early 1993. At no time does the memo discuss the veracity of any of the facts mentioned in the report. This can be explained by the fact that the genocide has been taking place since April 1994, which makes it possible to put into perspective all the racist policies that have shaken Rwanda, and to shed light on them. But also, the absence of discussion is largely explained by the investigations conducted by the French forces during Operation Turquoise. Thus, from the very first days of the operation, the parachute commandos of the Air Force, the operators of the 1st RPIMa and the marines of the Trepel commando noted the extent of the massacres and the involvement of the political and administrative structures. Subsequently, the elements that the French forces accumulated, thanks to their contacts with the field, could only increase the awareness of the involvement of all Rwandan public organizations in the planning and execution of the genocide. This awareness was one of the decisive elements in the reorganization of the French forces' actions in the field and in their search for new local interlocutors within the framework of the creation of the SHZ. Based on these observations, General Wiroth posed a series of very forceful questions:

It is certain that the current crisis in Rwanda, upon reading this report, raises multiple questions about the future of France's African policy:

A country without any strategic importance, Rwanda concentrates a great quantity of the elements of future African crises: ethnic wars, clan power, support from abroad without much concern for the respect of human rights. Why has the Rwandan crisis occupied such a disproportionate place in France's African policy? Shouldn't France have distanced itself from the Habyarimana regime?

In view of the responsibility for the massacres by the Rwandan armed forces and the Presidential Guard, which France largely helped to structure, can we imagine forms of cooperation for the future, particularly military cooperation, that avoid these abuses and are better adapted to the new characteristics of the crises?

Finally, Mr. Carbonare, one of the authors of the report, stated in an interview that a certain number of French civilians or military personnel working in Rwanda

*tried to alert the French authorities through the Embassy or professional organizations, without success it seems. The organization of the mechanisms that were to be at the origin of the 1994 massacres from the highest level of the Rwandan State (presidency of the Republic, chief of staff of the armed forces) makes it necessary to question the capacity of the representatives of the French administrations present in the different spheres of Rwandan power to inform themselves, as well as the conditions of information of the French public authorities.*⁷⁶⁰

General Wiroth's questions in 1994 were undoubtedly to fuel the DAS's reflection on French policy in Rwanda throughout 1995. They took on a new relevance. Indeed, the creation in 1998 of the Parliamentary Mission chaired by Paul Quilès led to establishing documentary research units at the Ministry of Defense, which in turn produced collections of documents. Colonel Armel Le Port is in charge of coordinating this documentary research at the level of Major General of the Armed Forces staff. Among the boxes of archives transferred to the *Service historique de la Défense* by Colonel Le Port, General Wiroth's memo is to be found in the first box, that of the basic file on Rwanda, which deals with problematic questions raised by the Quilès Commission.⁷⁶¹ In 1998, the DAS memo was considered to pose substantive questions: it formulated questions to which the officers had to respond. In his memo of 24 April, 1998, "Rwanda: complementary elements,"⁷⁶² Colonel Le Port noted that the relevance was due to the fact that it analyzed precisely one of the reasons for the blindness of French institutions at the highest level. The colonel gives an update on what he calls "Conducting Rwandan Affairs"⁷⁶³: he notes that "two vulnerabilities are likely to appear during the hearings." It is necessary to mention an excerpt from the memo already quoted by Colonel Le Port:

The VARRET-HUCHON hostility

the "parallel networks" of information and decision-making

At the EMP, General Huchon "wanted the skin" of the "little statue" who was the only obstacle to the policy of support of the Élysée.

*To do this, he needed to get around the obstacle by direct intervention, thanks in particular to the INMARSAT suitcases and to some accomplices within the army. His appointment as head of the MMC only partially simplified his task, because the creation of the COS cut off his network in 1993.*⁷⁶⁴

7.2.8.2 THE GREAT DIFFICULTY OF CRITICAL ANALYSIS BY THE MILITARY

The conclusion of Colonel Le Port's memo on the Varret/Huchon opposition emphasizes that what continued to hinder the latter's will once he became head of the Military Cooperation Mission was the effective setting up of the Special Operations Command and the constitution of its staff. In retrospect, historical distance allows us to measure the extent of the special operations dimension in the actions required of the French forces in Rwanda, whether it be assistance and training to foreign forces or actions in response to potential hostage-taking of French nationals. From this perspective, it can be seen that a large part of the French military actions between 1991 and 1993 were entrusted by the Armed Forces Staff and the political authorities to units, above all the 1st Marine Infantry Parachute Regiment, which were later integrated into the Special Operations Command. However, it is difficult to qualify French military actions in Rwanda over time, given that they were undertaken under the cover of the Ministry of Cooperation, despite the efforts made in particular by Pierre Joxe, Minister of Defense, to obtain a clarification of the objectives and means of military cooperation in Africa.

Beyond Pierre Joxe's approach, we can observe a French constant, that of not putting a policy into words and not formulating clear objectives. Part of the explanation lies in the fact that at no time was a global questioning of French military policy in Rwanda assumed. Indeed, the various actors do not have the opportunity to question the attainability of the objectives and the possibility of putting in place the means to meet them, in order to effectively contribute to giving the political authorities the intellectual means they need in order to hone their thinking and their decisions.

More broadly, the study of the production of the different services of the Armed Forces Staff and of National Defense over the entire period shows that elements of reflection were present and therefore potentially available. Nonetheless, one should not make the mistake of a retrospective analysis. Indeed, if the elements of reflection were present, they could not be mobilized because of the way the powers were organized in the early 1990s. However,

just as the French political power in Rwanda is always ready to respond to Rwandan emergencies without ever projecting itself into a viable and pragmatic long-term strategy, the Armed Forces staff is never put in a position to propose strategic options; it is always called upon to solve a problem linked to the urgency of the situation. To a certain extent, in dealing with the question of Rwanda in France, over the long term, we see little mobilization of the thinking and planning capacities of the administrations and the general staff, which are always taken as a means of action after a political decision and rarely as a force for reflection prior to the decision.

As soon as the action of the armed forces was called into question by the media and by foreigners at the summer of 1994 turning point, in the terms we know, critical analysis of the operations carried out in Rwanda gave way to an obstinate defense. It does not want to fuel the attacks or weaken the united front against the detractors. At the same time, a vast reflection on the future of the French military was launched, notably with the “White Book” desired by the Prime Minister. The emblematic Rwandan experience was frozen, because it was too dangerous to study. The case has in a way vitrified. Anchoring a new reflection in the critical analyses that have just been presented, emanating from lucid officers and researchers, is certainly a way forward. These analyses go far beyond the sole case of the military, they embrace the question of the republican State, of political decision, of the ethics of action, of the unthought and of freedom.

7.3 A CRISIS OF POLITICAL DECISION? THE QUESTION OF THE REPUBLICAN STATE IN RELATION TO RWANDA

The Rwandan dossier as it is handled by the French political and administrative authorities offers a case study for the functioning of a democratic State. The French Constitution guarantees the democratic character and functioning of institutions. Rwanda, where France was the most involved western nation between 1990 and 1994,

raises questions about the functioning of institutions marked by repeated deviations from the regulatory norm, by the rejection of contradictory information, and by political decisions that are impervious to any criticism, to any warning, to any questioning.

It is possible to observe a “Rwandan crisis” of the republican State as well as of the thought of institutions, as evidenced by multiple data from the previous chapters which the present chapter tries to synthesize. It is not a retrospective view that ignores the context, the logic of the actors, and judges the past in the light of the standards of the present. It is not forbidden to do so, but once the history is restituted, it gives way to a reflection of a philosophical nature.

Important, even crucial questions arise about the collection and circuits of information, about the rejection of dissident analyses and independent knowledge, including that of researchers and academics, about the weight of closed and unilateral representations, about the situation of not thinking about the genocidal process, about the choices of concealment versus media coverage, about the acts of hostility conducted against institutions advocating another policy, about the processes of marginalization of those who would contest the unilateral processes of decision. These questions are being asked today, and they have been taken up, as we have seen in part 2 of the chapter, by a set of analyses that have become a corpus.

In addition to the failure of the knowledgeable State, there are deviations from administrative and ethical norms which, when they become frequent and accepted, end up leading to violations of the rule of law. All the institutions concerned would be collectively responsible for having tolerated these worrying intellectual and administrative practices. However, there are acts and individuals who refuse these deviations, who lead professional resistance, ethical engagements in accordance with what the service of the State and the Republic teaches. This minority among the political authorities and public agents was not only not listened to, but was also excluded from the decision making process as well as from the execution of orders. The beginning of the cohabitation was able to modify this balance of power but did not interrupt it because of its established power. This dominant system of power in the service of a policy that was largely disconnected from Rwandan reality left no possibility for thinking about the genocidal risk, which was documented by the actors.

7.3.1 The question of information in support of the decision

7.3.1.1 ABUNDANT DOCUMENTATION IN THE WORKING FILES

The working files in the archives provide information on the genesis of the decisions and on the way in which they are based or not on diverse and verified knowledge. There is often abundant documentation, particularly in the form of diplomatic telegrams (TDs) and AFP dispatches, which can be found in almost every administration, with the exception of the EMP box, which contains only the memos to the President of the Republic, without any of the sources from which they were written. The so-called “supporting documents” are not always classified as such. Often, the sources of information are placed in bulk in the boxes. The documentation, sometimes very rich, is essentially received rather than sought. From the Africa unit of the presidency, the Prime Minister Édouard Balladur’s office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, and the Armed Forces headquarters, a great deal of information was received, generally with a dispatch memo, as prescribed by administrative rules, from other offices of central administrations and services in the field or from diplomatic posts (with an over-representation of those of the Great Lakes nations, Addis Ababa, headquarters of the OAU, Brussels, Geneva and New York with the French delegation to the United Nations, Washington, . .). The letters sent to the ministers are also kept with the generally standardized response proposals.

Some services, whose vocation is more to do so, establish press files and carry out media monitoring.⁷⁶⁵ This real mass of information is processed in a very unequal way by the actors. They give priority to information that is consistent with the decisions taken. When they are not present, they are provoked, as shown to the point of caricature by the initiatives of the President’s personal military staff, responsible for validating the presidential will. The verification of information is rarely carried out except by the DGSE, whose mission it is to do so. Basic frameworks of analysis are applied to documents. Those emanating from the Habyarimana regime and the Rwandan armed forces become evidence in support of objective facts.

Those coming from the RPF or the Rwandan opposition are immediately the object of suspicion or even rejection on principle.

If the decision is relatively fragmented, in particular because some information is kept hidden from certain actors - the repetition of instructions of discretion and confidentiality can be seen on many instructions or notifications of orders - information is less so, especially since the actors are in a position to seek it out. Of course, few of them can claim to have a global view of the situation. In view of the documentation in the working files, we can see that this possibility exists and that it was utilized, often in the services responsible for analysis and broad-focus foresight, such as the Centre of the same name at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Delegation for Strategic Affairs at the Ministry of Defense, but also in services more exposed to decision-making at the Armed Forces Staff or the Directorate of African and Malagasy Affairs.

7.3.1.2 ANALYSES THAT ARE AT ODDS WITH EACH OTHER

Distinct from the documentary files, the analyses that emanate from them are also a source of interrogation. In addition to the fact that they favor the type of information that supports the dominant thesis - what is called “confirmation bias”⁷⁶⁶ - there are internal contradictions, as illustrated by the example of the DAM memo of 17 January, 1991.⁷⁶⁷ It contains precise information on the hunt for Tutsi, in contradiction with the conclusion: “on the whole, abuses were avoided.”⁷⁶⁸ Other cases expose highly inexplicable data concealments unless they were intentional. On 8 April, 1994, the French government ordered the SGDN to suspend the validity of all exports of arms and war materials to Rwanda and Burundi, including the validity of ongoing procedures.⁷⁶⁹ This embargo decision taken at the level of the Prime Minister - of which the SGDN is one of the departments - does not seem to be known to the DRM’s executives, or at least it is not mentioned by the DRM agent who met, “at his request [...] Colonel Ntahobari, Rwanda’s military and air attaché in Paris” on 15 April. The Rwandan officer explained that his country’s military staff “urgently needed ammunition, the list of which is annexed”⁷⁷⁰ to the memo sent to the head of the DRM, General Heinrich, and he also wanted

France to have 5,000 60 mm mortar shells transported to Goma “from Tel Aviv” and “other less urgent ammunition (grenades) from Warsaw” for Rwanda.

7.3.1.3 POLITICAL SPEECH AND ADMINISTRATIVE TRANSLATION

In the immediate future, it is necessary to note this fracture between political action and administrative translation. The first, uncoupled from the second, may suggest that it is merely public communication without political reality. Another question concerns the articulation between the public speech of political leaders and their translation into administrative action, both civil and military. This is the case, in particular, of the two statements made by Alain Juppé in Brussels on 16 May 1994 and by Lucette Michaux-Chevry on 24 May, recognizing the genocide of the Tutsi and, in the case of the latter, calling for the identification and trial of those responsible.⁷⁷¹ However, the diplomatic TDs, which set out the Department’s positions in the same way as they transmitted the decision, do not reproduce this extremely firm French position on the recognition of the genocide of the Tutsi. This was coupled with the statement of the President of the Republic at the core cabinet meeting of 22 June, 1994: “We must not fail to denounce the genocide perpetrated by the Hutus. The madness took hold of them after the assassination of President Habyarimana.”⁷⁷² As far as we know, no public statement from the President of the Republic followed this formal request from François Mitterrand. No instructions were given via his advisors to the ministries concerned. The reason for this can be found in the following pages.

7.3.1.4 HOW A MINISTER OF DEFENSE VISITING OPERATION TURQUOISE IS INFORMED

A file kept in the office of François Léotard shows how a minister is informed. The Minister of Defense was leaving for Rwanda at the time. Laurent Bili, his deputy diplomatic advisor, gave him a memo entitled “French involvement in Rwanda (1990-1994),”⁷⁷³ which is in the file. Laurent Bili immediately raises the issue of “ethnic tensions” described as a “recurring phenomenon in Rwanda, as in Burundi [...] This rivalry

between Hutu and Tutsi has been at the heart of the history of the Great Lakes States since independence.” Political and social factors are dismissed in favor of explanations based on ethnicity, even though analyses such as those of the Rwanda redactor in 1991 emphasized the artificial nature of these categories in view of the uniqueness of “the same people.” Thus, the RPF is referred to by this categorization: it is “largely dominated by this ethnic group.” In the same way, “France’s policy,” which the diplomat presents as “clear,” is summarized in “three objectives”: the first persists in this ethnicist approach (“Preventing a minority ethnic group from overthrowing a legal government thanks to foreign aid”), while the other two focus on “encouraging the opening of negotiations between the parties” and “involving the UN.” The memo notes that France “had succeeded in achieving these three objectives when the assassination of President Habyarimana plunged Rwanda into chaos.” The account of the events immediately following the assassination makes no mention of the systematic massacres of Tutsi or the large-scale eliminations of Hutu democrats, in direct contradiction with the declaration of recognition made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs the day before the memo was written. The latter is limited to mentioning Operation Amaryllis for the evacuation of French and foreign nationals, insisting on the assistance of the Rwandan government “to the entire foreign community, but also - and this must be emphasized - to Rwandan citizens working for the government or French institutions.” This statement is, to say the least, tendentious, as is that of French support for UN involvement,⁷⁷⁴ since France did not mobilize to ensure that UNAMIR benefited from Chapter VII and, after 6 April, voted in favor of a reduction in UN forces. The deputy technical advisor informed his minister of France’s commitment to the “Rwandan dossier” by “deciding very quickly on a very important humanitarian effort, either directly (sending 2,200 tons of flour), or by providing financial support to the actions of the ICRC and NGOs. A final paragraph describes the “gloomy outlook”:

On the political level, the RPF, by ruling out the necessary sharing of power with the former governmental movement (MRND), is choosing a military solution. While a military victory for the RPF cannot be ruled out in the short term, the weak ethnic base of the RPF and the permeability of the borders (Zaire) can only

contribute to maintaining the country in a State of civil war. Increased involvement by the countries of the region and the United Nations must therefore seek to convince the parties in the conflict to return to the spirit of the Arusha Agreement, failing which any lasting solution is illusory.

The Deputy Diplomatic Advisor's statement does little to inform or enlighten his minister. The proposed memo is problematic in terms of information and analysis, as it refers to a vulgate for each "crisis" in Africa. The problem is that by 28 June, the genocide of the Tutsi had been recognized by both France and the United Nations, knowledge of the genocidaires had been acquired, and consequently, the idea of relaunching the Arusha negotiations between the RPF and the "former governmental movement (MRND)" was illusory, since it would be a matter of dialogue with an extremist Hutu power that was carrying out a mass extermination. The paragraph quoted at the end of the memo suggests that this would be the option proposed by France, which could lead François Léotard to meet with members of the interim government or MRND militants: this places a minister of the Republic in an untenable position for the present, with serious consequences for the future. In contrast to the "civil war" thesis, the reality is that Rwanda is facing genocide and the RPF's military option is aimed at defeating the Rwandan Armed Forces, both from the perspective of conquering the territory and stopping the genocide of the Tutsi. Furthermore, if the Minister had been properly informed, it would have been necessary to mention that the weak involvement of the United Nations was the result of choices made by the Security Council, on which France, as a permanent member, had weighed heavily, particularly during the reduction of UNAMIR. Given the information available and confirmed at the time, the memo is deficient and even inaccurate in some respects, giving an erroneous interpretation of reality. Charged with enlightening the Minister of Defense on the diplomatic level, it clearly did not allow François Léotard to understand what was at stake in the events in Rwanda. Finally, this document, dated 28 June, differs from a memo of 17 May,⁷⁷⁵ only by the addition of the last paragraph cited above. Does this mean that an analysis of 17 May remains valid, when the weeks between that date and 28 June proved crucial for the fate of Rwanda and the Rwandans, as well as for the recognition of a genocide in Africa? Apparently not.

The memos from the DAM contained in the file prepared for the minister leaving for Zaire do not make up for the paucity of information noted above, and even support it. On 6 May, the head of the Central and Eastern Africa sub-directorate introduced a vision of the history of Rwanda as “traditionally disrupted by the opposition of the Tutsi and the Hutu”⁷⁷⁶ - although she mentioned the predominance of anti-Tutsi massacres. She insists on a duty of neutrality, an imperative likely to relaunch the political dialogue: “France must guard against choosing between the parties, all the more so as they should be its interlocutors within the framework of a government of unity if, as is desirable, the political dialogue allows the resumption of the Arusha process.”⁷⁷⁷

Such a discourse would possibly make sense if Rwanda had not plunged into genocide. With this realization, the principle of neutrality or the idea of relaunching the dialogue would be incredibly unreal. This unreality will continue throughout 1994. And if the existence of genocide was finally put forward, it was almost immediately accompanied by a shift to the plural, “genocides,” the qualification then being presented as an aggravated form of massacres.

7.3.1.5 ECPA RUSHES: FRANÇOIS LÉOTARD IN GOMA ON 29 JUNE, 1994

The course of the trip, as well as the Minister’s communication during his visit to the SHZ, proved to be imprecise, to say the least, while some of the people he met seemed to belong to Hutu extremism. François Léotard was forced to make general speeches that made it difficult for the Turquoise units and their leaders. The rushes produced by the ECPA soldiers show images of the press conference that François Léotard and Lucette Michaux-Chevry held in Goma before returning to Paris. It seems to take place in a large military tent. General Lafourcade was sitting next to the two ministers. François Léotard explains:

We are barely a week after the Security Council Resolution 929. It was passed, as you may recall, last Wednesday at exactly this time. And so, eight days later, we have been able, with many difficulties as you know, to ensure that a very significant potential of forces is already here, here in Zaire, and in the process of operating in Rwanda, where situations, people

*in danger or distress, are reported to us. The results are already satisfactory, and we must continue, but men and women have already been saved by the mere presence of French soldiers. In particular in a number of places where civilians were under threat. I am not just talking about the operation to evacuate the nuns in Kibuye; I am also talking about the simple French presence, which has certainly allowed some of the belligerents to either slow down their action or to momentarily interrupt it. But of course, this is not enough. We are aware of a certain number of places where a certain number of Rwandans, whatever their ethnicity, are taking refuge today, and we will endeavour in the days to come to continue the operation [...].*⁷⁷⁸

The Minister of Defense then insisted that other European and African countries should intervene. Next, he answered questions from journalists, one of which most likely concerned the massacres underway on Bisesero Hill.

Mme. Minister, Mr. Minister, we understand these difficulties. Nevertheless, if people were massacred a few kilometers from where the French forces are, certainly it would be a political disaster?

François Léotard answers: Sir, of course the French soldiers are generous and courageous men and so if they had information of this nature, I can tell you, they would intervene, it is obvious, it is obvious! So... they... It's assistance to persons in danger, of course they would, and I can tell you that we are currently gathering all the necessary information to try to go where the danger is the most pressing. But I insist once again on the disproportion between what appears to be humanitarian needs today, and the dangers faced by a certain number of thousands of people, and the means available.

*This is not an operation with a military objective, this must be made very clear! The army is a tool here, and a tool to save lives, which is one of the most noble functions of a soldier, but it is not a bellicose function, I have just reminded you, in any way!*⁷⁷⁹

Poorly prepared for his trip, the Minister of Defense nonetheless touched on an important relative theme in his last statements in Goma, that of “assistance to persons in danger.” The difficulty seems to be to articulate it clearly with another issue, that of the omnipresent genocidal danger in the region, as the soldiers deployed on the ground are learning to discover. They must act as well as understand. This is certainly an overwhelming task.

7.3.2 Suspicion and rejection of independent, dissident, and scholarly knowledge

7.3.2.1 UNTAPPED EXTERNAL REPORTS

The management of the United Nations and international organizations is the recipient, directly or via the DFRA New York and Geneva posts, of all the documentation necessary for its operation. The sessions of the Human Rights Commission in the former Palais des Nations in Geneva show France in a very advanced position on the Rwandan file, in order to prevent its ally from being judged too harshly in this area. A handwritten note displays the following words after the name of a DNUOI official: “Attention Rwanda.”⁷⁸⁰ The Directorate’s archives bring together all of the UN’s production on Rwanda from 1990 to 1994, in particular on the highly documented and very sensitive issue of human rights violations in that country. Some reports go beyond the analysis of this situation, noting that it is insufficient to consider the situation and addressing the question of genocide head-on. The Report on the Human Rights Situation in Rwanda,⁷⁸¹ submitted by René Degni-Ségui on 25 May, 1994, focuses on the “definition of the enemy” of 21 September, 1992.⁷⁸² This is one of the data that allowed the rapporteur to conclude, with regard to the massacres unleashed against the Tutsi, that it was indeed a genocide.⁷⁸³

A Report on the “situation in Rwanda,” addressed to the “Commission on Human Rights, Geneva, 24-25 May 1994,”⁷⁸⁴ mentions a series of precisely documented facts, setting out how the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which entered into force on 12 January, 1951, is applicable to the events in Rwanda. It was then a question of “appointing a rapporteur on genocide.”⁷⁸⁵ This reflection on genocide and its distinction from the subject of human rights violations was not mobilized in France’s action in the Security Council during the same period - as Chapter 4 notes.

7.3.2.2 DEFIANCE AND REJECTION OF CRITICAL INTERNAL INFORMATION

Since 1990, the alignment of diplomats with the analyses underlying the policy conducted in Rwanda seems to have had as a corollary, over

the entire 1990-1994 period, the rejection of any criticism that might cast a shadow on its relevance.

Called upon to assess the 1990 report produced by Jean-François Leguil-Bayart at the CAP, the French ambassador to Rwanda, Georges Martres, vigorously rejected the analysis as outlined in Chapter 1. However, this case is sufficiently exemplary to be re-examined. Here, it is a matter of taking a stand against the *Centre d'analyse et de prospective* (CAP, Center for Analysis and Forecasting), which is hardly accepted by the central administration and the diplomats in post, but also of challenging the critical expertise in itself. For the diplomat's attack against the researcher is violent.

The CAP report was sent by the Department to the ambassador for his opinion. Georges Martres reacted in a seven-page text,⁷⁸⁶ sent on 15 November, 1990. He took up the various points of the researcher's analysis, resolutely contesting them and defending President Habyarimana. While he too believes that Rwanda is a "detonator" for the sub-region marked by the fragility of the neighboring States, he rejects the two other factors of the "Rwandan crisis" as Jean-François Leguil-Bayart sees them.

The regime's exhaustion is not new, but it is no more marked than elsewhere: "the Rwandan head of state is not so much more exhausted after 17 years in power than the most illustrious of his French-speaking colleagues, whose political longevity may seem equally astonishing."⁷⁸⁷ Taking up Jean-François Bayart's arguments, the ambassador notes that the protest against the hold of the Gisenyi clan and the economic deterioration is long-standing, and that it is wrong to claim that the response manifests radical authoritarianism (although below, Georges Martres refers to the "monopolistic power of the President's clan").⁷⁸⁸ But he regrets that this regime lacks the media genius of the exiled opponents who act effectively towards the West. Habyarimana welcomed the La Baule appeal with "moderate enthusiasm"; he was ready for reforms within two years, which the ambassador acknowledged was a bit long: a political charter and a new constitution that "would not exclude" a multiparty system - the conditional tense limits the president's commitment.

Like Jean-François Leguil-Bayart, Georges Martres recognizes that the success of a negotiated settlement is unlikely; but he thinks that the

fall of the current government may bring in a more conservative one. According to the ambassador, the RPF cannot win because it is too marked by its Tutsi majority to be truly democratic. Rwanda's president is stronger than his neighbors, largely because of the popular support he enjoys. Martres wonders about Museveni's future as both OAU president and head of Uganda, as Rwandan exiles hold a significant place in the Ugandan army.

The ambassador praised the Franco-Belgian intervention, which had enabled the Hutu to avoid a military defeat and prevented power from falling into the hands of "a Tusti oligarchy" supported by the mixed-race and Hutu bourgeoisie; relying on the majority principle, Ambassador Martres predicted that what the Tutsi had lost through the ballot box they intended to recover by force of arms.⁷⁸⁹ It is the ethnic problem that dominates the "social polarization" in Rwanda and the operation inaugurated on 1 October is presented by the Hutu as "the return of this aristocratic domination"; the ancestral mistrust persists with regard to the "privileged caste" of the Hutu. The ambassador appeals to a traditional, ethnicized vision conveyed by the authorities. In intellectual and business circles, the Tutsi have concluded alliances with the Hutu, "alliances that are often matrimonial and in line with the Tutsi tradition of the conquest of power by women."⁷⁹⁰ While the researcher, Jean-François Leguil-Bayart, works on a more social dimension, without neglecting the weight of ethnic groups but showing the instrumentalization, the ambassador presents the French intervention as positive: it protected French nationals and at the same time prevented a change in the head of State, which would not have been more democratic, due to the weight of Hutu conservatives unfavorable to any opening; it avoided serious ethnic clashes, slowed down the external aggression led by Tutsi of Rwandan origin, certainly, but closely linked to the Ugandan army. "In leaving the country, our soldiers will leave behind them a regime that is temporarily strengthened but exposed to serious financial and economic difficulties aggravated by the war and which is also threatened by its most conservative and obscurantist wing."⁷⁹¹

This very precise answer, which repeats the CAP's report point by point, shows that this institution plays its role in the analysis and

forecasting of international politics. The consultant's report runs counter to the policy being implemented, and disturbs the ambassador's vision, which is rooted in a very traditionalist reading of Rwandan society that can have a definite influence on the Department. Ambassador Martres reiterates this through his commentary on a letter from the ADFR that was sent to him for analysis.

The French ambassador in Kigali and the ADFR letter

In June 1991, the Association démocratique des Français du Rwanda [Democratic Association of the French in Rwanda] (ADFR) sent a letter to Marie-Claire Nivoit, Secretary General of the Association démocratique des Français de l'étranger [Democratic Association of the French Abroad], to inform the "mother association" of the Rwandan branch's concern "to see human rights respected, particularly in countries where France intervenes as an essential donor." The missive evokes the French engagements of La Baule, the speech having been "clearly mentioned by Mr. J. Pelletier, then Minister for Cooperation and Development, during his visit to Kigali in November 1990." Under international pressure, the Rwandan president committed himself to several fundamental reforms which the ADFR has not seen implemented. It states "some facts":

-There is no reason to believe that the removal of the "ethnicity" mention will be implemented [...].

-Prisoners whose files are empty have not always been released.

-Prisoners released on the eve of the decision of donors to support structural adjustment in Rwanda (70,000,000 FF as far as France is concerned): most of them were unable to resume their jobs, some were threatened and bullied by law enforcement officials (confiscation of identity papers for several days, putting them at risk of being imprisoned again), others were prevented from leaving the country and had their passports confiscated.

Some prisoners were sentenced to death under popular pressure. [...].⁷⁹²

In addition to the observation of serious and systematic human rights violations by the Rwandan State services, the ADFR emphasizes the particular relentlessness of the authorities against the "Tutsi enemy," although it appears very difficult to document:

No information is verifiable regarding the extent of the abuses committed either by certain members of the population in October/November

*and January/February in the prefectures of Rubengeri and Gisenyi (what was the extent of the massacres? legal consequences?), or by certain soldiers of the regular army in January/February in these same prefectures (rapes, robberies...).*⁷⁹³

An earlier passage in the letter indicates that the victims were Tutsi, because of the state propaganda, the violence of which caught the attention of the ADFR:

*Using official channels (State radio, representatives in the provinces), the government, announcing in early June an imminent and massive attack on the country by the enemy from abroad, mobilized the population against the Tutsi enemy. This brings with it the risk of a certain slippage and slows down the democratic dynamic. Some journalists are imprisoned for endangering the security of the State as soon as they consider criticizing the government in power. Other newspapers that have been spreading an anti-Tutsi ideology since December 1990 continue to stir up ethnic hatred without being bothered (see Kangura, n°6, pages 6 to 8).*⁷⁹⁴

The analysis made by Ambassador Martres and sent to “His Excellency Mr. Roland Dumas, Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs” under cover of the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs, on 18 July 1991, contains the following remarks.⁷⁹⁵ If the “facts recounted are globally accurate,” they are presented “in a negative manner without, in his opinion, sufficiently taking into account the ethnic and historical context in which they must be placed.” When this is the case, explains the French ambassador, it turns out that “the Tutsi minority, which has suffered and continues to suffer real prejudice [...] itself bears serious responsibility for the situation of confrontation that has developed in Rwanda.” And he added, to clarify his thoughts:

*If abuses and exactions are committed against this minority, for eight months and still very recently, not only Rwandan soldiers are killed on the border but civilians are massacred by the RPF. The crimes of some certainly do not excuse those of others, but the foreign observer must keep a balance in his assessments.*⁷⁹⁶

The ambassador therefore states that the victims are themselves responsible for the violence they suffer because of the possible identification between them and the Rwandan rebellion. The ethnicist logic is thus mobilized in the explanation, validating the process of violence exerted on the Rwandan Tutsi. In addition, the diplomat exposes the equivalence of the massacres, which leads him to justify and excuse those of

the government: nowhere in the memo are the latter condemned. On the contrary, he takes sides with the presidential regime. To conclude, he states:

We must not forget that this diaspora was originally constituted by the class that was culturally and materially dominant in Rwanda. It recalls in some respects our emigrants from Coblence. It has rights that deserve to be recognized. But in wanting to defend the rights of the Rwandan people, our compatriots, influenced by certain personal relationships, should not make a mistake about the people.⁷⁹⁷

The conclusion seems to emphasize the principles that guide France's action in Rwanda. Reject critical reflection, thoughts that diverge from the diplomatic vulgate, including those coming from citizens of a free country that the ambassador represents, as well as the Quai d'Orsay and the DAM; inflict on the latter a lesson in French and Rwandan history. To read Rwandan history precisely in the light of the propaganda of the single party and of Hutu extremism that denounces the external aggression of the RPF and the complicity of the Tutsi minority. To acclimatize the logic of the latter as an internal enemy whose disabling is legitimate. Supporting the equivalence of the massacres.

Certainly in good faith, the French ambassador describes the spiral of violence that could lead to genocide: he does not see the seriousness of it and legitimizes it to his hierarchy. He thus demonstrates a characteristic form of submission at a time when discordant voices in diplomacy are being expressed, such as that of Ambassador Gérard in Kampala or the redactor Anfré at the DAM. These voices were freer professionally, independent of France's partners, and better informed historically, politically and sociologically. Georges Martres gives, of diplomacy, the example of an absence of critical thinking faced with the propaganda of his country of residence, and of a submission to the views of his hierarchy. This attitude is all the more worrying given that the French defense attaché, Colonel Galinié, insisted in his message at the end of his mission, dated 19 June, 1991, which has already been cited⁷⁹⁸ and co-signed by the chargé d'affaires Klein representing the ambassador, on the danger to French cooperation posed by the extremist inner circle surrounding President Habyarimana. Galinié's analysis was not the one that the Quai and Élysée officials in charge of policy in Rwanda wished to receive and which

- it seems - they dismissed: this end-of-mission message can be found neither in the archives of the DAM, nor in those of the EMP and the Africa unit.

The submission of Ambassador Martres to the line defined at the Quai, and which he knows goes directly back to the Élysée, is achieved at the cost of methodological inconsistencies: the documents cited in the appendix to the letter sent to the Minister to discredit the ADFR letter contain two memos from Marie-France Pagnier, from the Central and East Africa sub-directorate, including the 17 January, 1991 memo already cited, which insists on the scale of the regime's repression after the RPF offensive of 1 October while emphasizing that there were no abuses.⁷⁹⁹ This analysis can be read as a necessary concession to the continuous line of making Habyarimana a solid partner in the framework of an alliance in Rwanda desired at the highest level. To this end, the services of the Quai d'Orsay, and even the advisors in the minister's office, were at the forefront of countering information on the regime's abuses. The responses to the FIDH report bear witness to this.

French diplomacy and the FIDH report, January-February 1993

The FIDH mission to Rwanda and the ensuing report led to a double analysis by French diplomacy, one public on 9 March, 1993 "in view of the cabinet meeting of the following day," and the other internal, as early as 8 March, by the deputy director for Central and Eastern Africa.⁸⁰⁰ Catherine Boivineau began by explaining that the Arusha negotiations "came up against the intransigence of the RPF, which set preconditions for examining the items on the agenda, relating to the events in the north-west of the country that led to ethnically and politically motivated massacres." She went on to discuss the FIDH mission and the public presentation of its conclusions. She emphasizes that "the conclusions are harsh on the Rwandan presidency," and adds:

However, the study seems biased and ignores the abuses committed by the Rwandan Patriotic Front. These include the exodus of approximately 350,000 people from the land it controls and the return of which it opposes, abuses against the civilian population in the form of attacks, robberies and kidnappings, and tension maintained by the firing of light and heavy weapons outside of military objectives.

If we consider that Catherine Boivineau did indeed have access to the FIDH study, and this is also the case for Bruno Delaye at the Élysée,⁸⁰¹ then it must be noted that she did not read it in its entirety insofar as this report does indeed mention the abuses committed by the RPF.⁸⁰² This fact is attested to by the Department's spokesperson in his public statement of 9 March, 1993, unintentionally confirming the biased nature of the DAM's analysis:

You may have seen that the International Federation for Human Rights had produced a report on the human rights situation in Rwanda. This report shows serious human rights violations and abuses committed in both government and RPF-controlled areas. This is why we are mindful of the existing ethnic tensions in Rwanda, which hostilities can only exacerbate. France, for its part, has always been concerned to promote a political settlement of the conflict. Measures were agreed upon in Arusha between the Rwandan government and the RPF to punish those responsible for the massacres and to conduct additional investigations.⁸⁰³

In both cases, French diplomacy evacuated the main point of the FIDH report, namely the perpetration of “massive and systematic human rights violations, with the deliberate intention of targeting a specific ethnic group,” describing in fact the beginning of a genocidal process. It uses the same argument that it has used since the French commitment in 1990, i.e. violence perpetrated equally by both sides. The FIDH study is considered insignificant and, as in the case of the Deputy Director of the DAM, has not been read. On a subject as important as human rights violations and their aggravation due to racialism, a subject on which France has a certain tradition of expertise, French diplomacy, through authorized voices, distorts a study that has no equivalent at the Quai d'Orsay. Its mistake was to question certainties that were less and less in line with the reality of the Rwandan situation. Rather than making it an element of a reflection on France's involvement in Rwanda, what it reveals is minimized and rejected.

7.3.2.3 INDIFFERENCE, IRRITATION, SUSPICION AND EVEN HOSTILITY TOWARDS SCHOLARLY KNOWLEDGE AND ITS AUTHORS

Between 1990 and 1994, there were changes in the way

scholarly knowledge was viewed and used by the public authorities in charge of policies in Rwanda. Indifference was followed by irritation, suspicion and then hostility, when the reality of an ongoing genocide in Rwanda became apparent. There are only very rare mentions in the administrative production or political discourse of particular works or simply of this type of knowledge. The recognition of the critical expertise that researchers bring to the table is all the more expected since there is a tradition of the scholarly state in the Republic, materialized after the war by the birth of the Documentation française on the initiative of men and women of the Free French Forces, or, closer to the facts under study, the creation of the CAP, where seconded researchers or consultants such as Jean-François Leguil-Bayart and Roland Marchal serve. The DAS is also a body of reflection where scientific knowledge is developed, or at least a critical reflection based on a documentary requirement. Without going into these historical reminders, it suffices to mention that the public status of CNRS and university researchers gives their production the same public dimension that justifies their use by other State agents.

Despite the presence, in the diplomats' work files, of scientific articles, conference manuscripts, and press publications by researchers, these do not seem to have any impact on reflection and analysis. Irritation is expressed when the media begin to take an interest in the production of researchers and disseminate them to a wider public.

Rare criticisms emerge, concerning this ostracism of scientific knowledge and critical reflection. They defend the external point of view necessary for a good understanding of complex realities, as recommended by Pierre Conesa, who insists on the need, "when a crisis unit is set up, to associate, as much as possible, expert personalities from outside the administration."⁸⁰⁴ The importance of an ambitious documentation policy was also stressed. After returning from a three-year stay at the French Embassy in the United States, "during which he was responsible for contacts with the American Secretary of Defense in the area of African issues," General Faupin submitted a "short, personal summary" to the DAS on 9 November, 1994, in which he pointed out that France did not have "a monopoly on knowledge of

African data” and that “American universities give a great deal of space to studies on the continent.” But “this abundance lacks a center, a coordination”⁸⁰⁵ allowing perhaps, what the author does not say, a better use of this knowledge. The confrontation of agents from the diplomatic and military worlds with the indifference towards scholarly production on African issues may have led some of them to switch to the research camp, renouncing careers or ideals of public service.⁸⁰⁶

On the part of the researchers themselves, exhortations to act have been addressed to political leaders. More rare were those who agreed to be taken into action, like the historian Gérard Prunier who accompanied the Rufin mission to Kigali to meet Paul Kagame, the RPF military leader.

7.3.3 A closed and endogenous system of representations

7.3.3.1 A FIXED CONCEPTION OF FRANCE’S ROLE IN AFRICA

France’s involvement in Rwanda is indissociable from the geopolitical conceptions of the actors in charge, starting with the President of the Republic, whose interventions in the Defense Cabinet define quite precisely the reading grids. The defense of the French-speaking world in the face of Anglo-American threats was imposed as a watchword and satisfied the hostility of the head of state for Atlanticist theses. This is how General Quesnot was able to repel the excessive influence of Admiral Lanxade, judged too Atlanticist, with François Mitterrand.

The concept of the “majority people” and its democratic characteristic dominate the representation of Rwandan reality, which leads to the adoption of the colonial ideology of ethnic classification. It is deeply rooted in the representations of the political authorities as well as in those of the State agents, with rare exceptions, who are generally excluded from positions of responsibility. The redactor Anfré and the ambassador Gérard are among these exceptions.

A third representation animates the action of France in Africa and therefore in Rwanda. It is necessary to note the quasi-experimental, test dimension of French policy in Rwanda. It

refers to a postulate: the supposed difficulty of getting out of authoritarian regimes in Africa and explains how it comes to support corrupt, even mafia-like regimes. Jean-François Leguil-Bayart gave a presentation on the subject to the DAS on 15 November, 1994 on the “criminalization of States in Africa.”⁸⁰⁷

A fourth representation frames this action, and it reinforces the legitimacy of the presidential hold on the issue. It derives from a tragic vision of history that entrusts leaders with solidarity and a sense of duty and responsibility to lead peoples driven by violence. This vision means that, in their eyes, in Rwanda or elsewhere, there are neither victims nor executioners. It fundamentally explains François Mitterrand’s deep and permanent attachment to the person of Juvénal Habyarimana, extending to his family against all political logic, resulting with his wife, who was responsible for the preparations for the genocide against the Tutsi, being welcomed in France and protected on French soil by virtue of a presidential decision of an absolute nature⁸⁰⁸: it was imposed upon the deployment of Operation Amaryllis with the immediate evacuation of both the family surrounded by a “core group”⁸⁰⁹ and the orphans of Sainte-Agathe and Hutu extremists, and it has never been questioned by the successors of François Mitterrand.

The tragic vision of history also justifies the fact that the victims cannot be heroic and that the exhibition of their suffering is primarily the result of staged events orchestrated, in the case of the Tutsi, by RPF networks and activists such as journalists who are affiliated with them in Europe.

7.3.3.2 A REPLICAS OF THE CONFLICT IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA?

From the end of 1993, as can be seen from the archives - in particular those of the core cabinet meetings - the two external subjects of interest to France are Rwanda and the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, which at that time was concentrated in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Are there common perceptions by the French authorities of the two situations, for example, around the idea that there was a majority people struggling with the idea that there was a minority that was abusively presenting itself as persecuted? Or the idea that media offensives

would be conducted, which it would be necessary to denounce and resist. One observes, especially in the collection of defense cabinet minutes, that Bosnia often precedes the study of the Rwandan case.

Another link with the Bosnian theater would be the supply of arms, as mentioned in the message “rens-defense” of 30 April, 1994: “uncorroborated Ugandan sources report deliveries of arms and ammunition from Belgrade, via Zaire, to Rwandan forces.”⁸¹⁰

7.3.3.3 FRANCE AT THE UNITED NATIONS: AN ORGANIZED POLICY OF DEFLECTION?

At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United Nations and International Organizations Division (NUOI) was part of the Political Affairs Directorate⁸¹¹; it was headed by a diplomat and had about twenty agents in the 1970s. Its missions are diverse, in relation to the growing role of the United Nations in the activity of diplomacy (as shown by the summits of heads of State and government, the meetings of the Security Council at ministerial level, and the growing number of resolutions (in the 1970s, 15 to 20 resolutions were adopted by the Security Council, many for Rwanda between 1990 and 1994).

Exchanges between the Department and the permanent representatives in New York and Geneva (DFRA New York and DFRA Geneva) are very frequent, there may be several per day. The instructions from NUOI, referred to the political director and the cabinet of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in view of the statements to the Security Council, for the preparation of the speeches of the Secretary General or the President of the Security Council or any other occasions are very precise.

The mission of the Security Council is the maintenance of peace and security. In 1994, the permanent representative for France was Jean-Bernard Mérimée assisted by Hervé Ladsous. For the first time, Rwanda was a non-permanent member of the Security Council: Jean-Damascène Bizimana was appointed by Habyarimana until July 1994, when he was replaced in August by Manzi Bakuramutsa, the RPF being recognized as the legal regime.

7.3.3.4 “FRIEND” VERSUS “ENEMY”

France, through its political authorities - starting with the head of state - and its public officials, pursued a policy of strong support for the Rwandan regime and for President Habyarimana. As we have seen, the two presidents have a close relationship, the political consequences of which are immediate and direct in the Rwandan context, particularly in terms of military assistance. There is a form of personal and political friendship between the two men, and in any case, Juvénal Habyarimana never ceases to avail himself of that of François Mitterrand. These close ties have consequences for the French representatives, the ambassador, the defense attaché, and the military advisor to the chief of military staff, whom Habyarimana treats as intimates, inviting them to his residence and offering champagne, served by his daughters, at private parties in Kanombe.⁸¹²

France's support for Habyarimana's regime, which can be described as unconditional, did not provide him with the political means to remove the first extremist circle identified in June 1991 by the defense attaché in Kigali, Colonel Galinié.⁸¹³ His message was addressed to all the institutions in charge of military cooperation with Africa, including the EMP at the Élysée, which was directly and heavily involved in the Rwandan dossier. The risk of political and even personal and physical control of Juvénal Habyarimana by the extremists in his entourage is therefore known. The possibility that the French authorities would have had of separating Habyarimana from the extremist grip and bringing him to assume a historic role in favor of democratization was never a real option, because it was never conceived intellectually and never intended politically.

The corollary of this accepted hold of extremism on France's main partner in Rwanda lies in the exclusion of the RPF from the Rwandan political field as well as from the negotiation space. It is true that the RPF did participate in the negotiations that began in 1991 and that led to the Arusha accords signed on 4 August, 1993. However, it was not considered by France to be a sincere partner. Instead, it is portrayed as a manipulative, insincere, falsely political and national party, using military pressure to change the course of diplomacy

according to the adage “Talk and Fight.” The RPF’s effort to say what it is or how it wishes to be understood is systematically rejected by the French authorities and the State agents obliged to this reading. The RPF is said to be ethnic and foreign, to be attacking on its own account (even though its offensives are also presented as a response to the increasingly extreme massacres of Tutsi), and its strategy is said to be one of the coup d’état practices that characterize “Marxist” movements. The RPF remains an enemy of France in the way it is portrayed throughout the period 1990-1994, not only by proxy but directly, to the point that France engages in a hostile act characterized by intimidation and even war with the arrest of an RPF delegation that came to Paris to negotiate at the invitation of Paris.⁸¹⁴

The Arusha Accords were concluded with the decisive support of France. At the same time, hostility towards the RPF did not cease, while alignment with President Habyarimana continued, contributing to undermining both the negotiations and the future implementation of the agreements.

7.3.3.5 MISSED OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE RPF?

A study of the archives, particularly the diplomatic archives, reveals a clear refusal to engage in discussions with the RPF. The reason for this is both not to weaken the line of support for President Habyarimana and to be wary of a movement that is represented as ethnic and foreign, which is summarized by the expression systematically used at the Élysée to describe it as “Ugandan-Tutsi.” Moreover, as we have already seen, the RPF would be “totalitarian” because it is irreducible to democracy, a democracy that French policy defines, for Africa in general and Rwanda in particular, on the basis of the “majority people” system.⁸¹⁵ In order to push it out of the political arena, to prevent it from gaining legal access to power and to force it to fight with arms, it is necessary to continue to confine it to an ethno-national definition. The DGSE is not listened to, it is even criticized. The French authorities persist in a fundamentally contradictory policy. All of the preceding chapters attest to this.

Despite this obstinacy in portraying the RPF as an “enemy” and the resolute assistance that the French authorities gave to Habyarimana’s regime in its armed struggle against the “Ugandan-Tutsi rebels,” the movement’s leaders repeatedly reiterated offers of direct dialogue with France. A TD from the French embassy in Washington dated 10 February, 1993 indicates the presence in the federal capital of the movement’s director of diplomatic affairs. Theogene Rudasingwa met with the American Deputy Secretary General and, according to the French ambassador Jacques Andréani, who signed the TD, he argued that “the current offensive was intended to send a ‘punitive message’ to President Habyarimana: the Front would not tolerate impunity for the ethnic violence of late January. Nor would it tolerate the intransigence shown by the presidential envoys in Arusha. But he had no intention of taking over the whole country (“We could conquer it but not run it”). Furthermore, Jacques Andréani adds, in his meeting with Hermann Cohen, Dr. Rudasingwa “insisted ‘furiously’ on the problem of French troops in Rwanda. Mr. Cohen strongly encouraged his interlocutor to contact the French authorities. The RPF delegation indicated that they would contact the French embassy (which they have not yet done). One of my staff members pointed out to Mr. Cohen that the French authorities had never closed their door to the RPF and remained ready to meet with its representatives.”⁸¹⁶ The study of the French position on the RPF conducted in this Report establishes the very great reluctance to engage with it. The diplomat’s statement is therefore inaccurate, and it is difficult to imagine that he is unaware of the truth on the subject. It is interesting to note that General Quesnot went to Washington a month later and in turn had a meeting with Hermann Cohen on 8 March.⁸¹⁷

As for the explanation given by the RPF for its military offensives, this is never accepted as a legitimate, if not possible, reason. However, it refers to an objective reality, that of the massacres organized against the Tutsi, which was well documented at the same time, including by the defense attaché in Kigali who, on 29 January, 1993, spoke of a “Tutsi and Bagogwe population [that was] still strongly traumatized.”⁸¹⁸ The anti-Tutsi massacres are generally presented as a “pretext” found

by the movement to launch its offensive. The reality of the massacres seems to be of little importance. What remains imperative is to challenge the word of the RPF and substitute what the Rwandan and French authorities believe to be the truth. That the RPF should be concerned about the anti-Tutsi massacres is attributed to the Machiavellian character of the movement, which most French political-administrative leaders *derealize*. The RPF no longer has a reality of its own in their eyes.

A less ideological approach to the RPF, in any case more marked by an effort to make its actions more explicit, seemed to emerge at the Élysée with the replacement of General Huchon by General Bentégeat as deputy to the special staff. Bentégeat sent a copy of a letter sent by the RPF to the President of the Republic to the advisors of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, through the same unofficial channel as his predecessor Huchon, on 1 September, 1993.⁸¹⁹ “It is dated after Arusha, wrote the new deputy at the EMP, and is not signed by Kagame but by Kanyarengwe. It is still interesting.”⁸²⁰ The RPF president wished to express his “most sincere thanks for the role played by France as an observer in our negotiations,” resulting in “a historic event, the beginning of a new era of respect for human rights, the rule of law and peace.” It is true that Colonel Kanyarengwe recalls the need for France to carry out the departure of its troops “as provided for in the Arusha Agreement.”⁸²¹ However, there is no new course in the relationship of the French presidency with the RPF. General Bentégeat was forced to fall in line. The latest episode at the Biarritz summit confirms the strength of the anti-RPF line.

7.3.3.6 INDIFFERENCE TO THE INFORMED VOICES OF A FRENCH AMBASSADOR

How does the French ambassador in Kampala view the RPF, when the Museveni regime welcomes and supports the party that is considered an enemy of Rwanda, and when the RPF attack of 1 October 1990 is presented as an “Ugandan-Tutsi” aggression? While his colleague in Kigali, Georges Martres, took a systematically negative view of the movement and often of the Tutsi part of the Rwandan population, Yannick Gérard, who was appointed to Kampala in August 1990, kept a greater distance and did not hesitate to make early proposals

to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to open up to the RPF.

Thus, on 11 October 1990, a few days after the RPF attack in Rwanda, Yannick Gérard informed the Department of an exchange between his first advisor, Antoine Anfré, who had just arrived in Kampala, and members of the RPF executive committee, Pasteur Bizimungu and “Tito.”⁸²² The Department of Foreign Affairs was also informed of a meeting between the RPF and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Pasteur Bizimungu is a Hutu who is opposed to Habyarimana’s policies and who had joined Uganda and the RPF a short time earlier, where he quickly took on responsibilities. The conversation revealed that the RPF is less warlike than its reputation suggests and more diplomatic, according to the ambassador. “The Front is not *a priori* opposed to dialogue and it is not hostile to the idea of an international conference.” Neither anti-Belgian nor anti-French, the RPF only asks that the French army leave Rwanda, leaving only the elements necessary for humanitarian aid, because the warring parties must not interfere (“a face-to-face meeting between *Inkotanyi* fighters and Habyarimana’s armed forces without outside interference would make it possible to avoid any blunders”⁸²³). The RPF would like to see the preservation of French and Belgian cooperation with Rwanda: “After all, Rwanda has a common past with France and Belgium that is not negative.” Yannick Gérard does not take a position, he passes on information that he does not doubt, probably at the very beginning of the war. It seemed essential to him that France maintain ties with the RPF, even if it was the “enemy” of Habyarimana’s regime. The message was explicit: the RPF wanted this. Ambassador Gérard was not heard, nor was his No. 2, Antoine Anfré, who later became an redactor at the DAM; drawing on his experience in the field, he concluded a memo in 1991 by saying that “the time has perhaps come to take another path,”⁸²⁴ thus suggesting that blindness to the RPF is not only erroneous but highly counterproductive.

Yannick Gérard has already had a long diplomatic career, both in the central administration and abroad. He serves the State by trying to understand in depth the country in which he finds himself, especially since the links between Uganda and France are complex. After two and a half years in Kampala, he tried, in a telegram, to make it clear that the Ugandan people did not share the same representation as their president and that it never ceased to mark its

difference⁸²⁵: “the cause of the Rwandan rebels is supported by Museveni but does not have the sympathy of the Ugandan population,” he wrote in March 1993, and he insisted on the fact that the capital of sympathy for France was growing. At that time, it was not a question of approaching the Department to try to bring France closer to the RPF. He insists on the fact that Ugandans are not very interested in the Rwandan crisis; the political parties and the press are even reserved with regard to the policy of support of the head of State. The parties and the press have “made their difference on the Rwandan crisis and have given a lot of space to the theses of the Rwandan government and president, implicitly letting us understand their reservations towards the official Ugandan doctrine and the statements of the RPF.”⁸²⁶ For Yannick Gérard, pleading for contacts to be established and maintained is a constant in his diplomatic work, and he occasionally receives RPF delegates.

After the failure of the Arusha negotiations on 24 June, 1993, in order to avoid a crystallization of the situation, Yannick Gérard suggested to the Department that a meeting be organized with the RPF in Paris, at a high level,⁸²⁷ possibly with Major Kagame. The trigger for this proposal came from the visit of the RPF delegate, Aloisea Inyumba, to Arusha⁸²⁸ who, while blaming Habyarimana for the failure to sign an agreement, told the ambassador that the RPF wished to establish a dialogue with France “with the aim of a better understanding of the respective positions with the hope of improving these relations.”⁸²⁹ The ambassador was not naïve, and did not fail to remind his interlocutor that the responsibility for the failure was shared, that the RPF should make gestures of goodwill and show “peaceful intentions.” However, it is the request for dialogue that is important, even in the form of informal reports. The fact that the approach comes at this precise moment, a few days after the failure of the Arusha meeting, is a sign that the RPF is asking for at least a hearing, if not for help from France. It was during this conversation that Gérard suggested to his interlocutor that Kagame be received by the director of Africa and possibly the Élysée’s Africa advisor, Bruno Delaye, thus at the highest level. The ambassador knows that a meeting at this level presents a risk and suggests that Major Kagame, with whom contact is difficult, be accompanied by “another intelligent official such as Patrick Mazimhaka” who is

flexible, he writes. This idea caught the attention of the reader, no doubt Bruno Delaye, since the TD is in his archives, who checked off the paragraph. As we know, it was not followed up.

At the DAM, the simplistic presentation of a purely Tutsi RPF led solely by Uganda, whose military actions in Habyarimana's Rwanda were nothing more than foreign invasions and coup attempts by an ethnic faction, gave way, from May 1994 onwards, to a more nuanced vision, albeit seemingly so. A memo from Catherine Boivineau, dated 6 May, 1994, provides an update on the "Rwandan crisis" and the question of "refugees excluded from their country." The Assistant Director for Central and Eastern Africa recalls that "nearly 600,000 Rwandans found refuge in neighboring countries" as a result of the massacres of Tutsi "that accompanied the seizure of power by the Hutu, who were in the majority (85%), [and which] increased in the following years." She mentions that after Museveni took power in Uganda, he tried to negotiate "with his Rwandan counterpart in February 1988 a return to Rwanda of the Banyar-Rwandan elements of the NRA, without result" and quite rightly concludes on "the ambiguity of the 1990 offensive: for some, a justified return of refugees to their country, for others, an invasion by a foreign army."

7.3.3.7 FACED WITH EVIDENCE OF RADICALIZATION OF THE "FRIEND"

As much as the "enemy" is adorned with all the vices, the "friend" is excused for his faults in spite of informed and repeated warnings, not only about acts of human rights violations but also about extreme violence against the Tutsi minority. As we have seen, the regular reports of Colonel René Galinié, in office from June 1988 to July 1991, showed the repeated warnings of a highly informed and thoughtful field defense attaché. The "Cahier d'opérations Noroît"⁸³⁰ (Noroît Operations Notebook) highlights his knowledge of the massacres perpetrated by a power that France was helping. This document shows the method of the defense attaché sharing intelligence with his Western counterparts, far from the Élysée schemes of the Anglophone threat on the countries of the field. On 10 October, 1990, at 6 p.m., Colonel Galinié gave his report to the Noroît detachment of which he was the commander. The redacting officer for the operations notebook wrote: "the US attaché" told him that "the

Rwandan Hutu had started to massacre Tutsi in the north-east. Several hundred people were reportedly killed. He reports that this will be in the headlines of the US press tomorrow,⁸³¹ including a forthcoming analysis by academic Philip Mortimer. Half an hour later, contact was made with the headquarters of the Belgian troops, still in Rwanda for a few weeks. The information was convergent: "According to them, a Belgian agency had announced massacres in Mukara in the northeast (3 villages) and spoke of 1,000 dead. The Belgians sought information."⁸³² A crucial hypothesis was put forward by Colonel Galinié on 22 October 1990. If the "massacre of the Tutsi in the interior" was confirmed, France would have to consider "the evacuation of French nationals (less than 300), but above all that of other Westerners, Soviets and Asians (1,000 to 1,500 people)" and also "the request for protection on the part of the Tutsi and Hutu who were in favor of them."⁸³³ The French defense attaché specified, for the benefit of the institutions that were duly informed (SGDN, MINDEF PARIS CAB, ARMÉES CENTOPS PARIS), that it was "difficult to give preference to one or the other of these possibilities. The chosen solution could still be between these two poles. It seemed essential to formulate them so that their characteristics and the dangers they entailed could be appreciated."⁸³⁴

The message of the defense attaché is crucial. He suggested that political and military thinking, which were closely linked, should take up this hypothesis of the massacre "of the Tutsi and Hutu who were in their favor." The institutions, says Colonel Galinié, must consider both the very possibility of this global massacre introducing a major risk of genocide and an appropriate response to the demand for protection of populations in danger of death. These requests multiplied, but were not heard, in spite of the alert sent by him on this subject while he was acting as a full officer of the French army. Historical research, the historian's eye on the archives, aims to find and exhume these minute traces of a history still to be written. Colonel Galinié was determined to expose the reality and to deduce all possible options for action, including a reversal of alliances, since the protection of the Tutsi and democratic Hutu would have led to a clear distancing from the extremist "inner circle"

described in his message at the end of the mission mentioned above.⁸³⁵

The defense attaché insisted to President Habyarimana on the necessary and urgent political openness that France expected from him, as was the case with the instructions he received from Paris. On several occasions, he discovered that the Rwandan president was exaggerating the threat of the RPF, that his men and his services were not hesitating to lie, and that he was trying to convince the French president of the seriousness of this threat. A 28 January message to Colonel Fruchard at the Armed Forces headquarters in Paris outlines the Rwandan head of State's requests for the reinforcement of Noroît. Such military support would make it possible to "better ensure the defense" of Kigali and "a gesture of this kind on the part of France would be presented as a direct support to his person, even to his clan, and a reminder of moderation for his adversaries who are manifesting themselves today."⁸³⁶

Colonel Galinié contested this analysis: "this interpretation seems inadequate, and moreover, this reinforcement is not justified militarily." In this respect, the defense attaché points out the lies or exaggerations of the Rwandan side:

Rubengeri was retaken by the FAR (which we advised) and it is now proven that it was not attacked by thousands of men as the president claims, taking up the words of Colonel Serubuga, who is thus trying to conceal his failure, but only by 300 to 400 rebels helped by some Ugandans. I told him so clearly, having personally collected testimonies and evidence on the ground on 23 January, 1991.

The presence of NRA forces (3 to 4 battalions, about 2,000 men) at the northern border probably corresponds less to "preparations for an attack" than to logistical support and, above all, to a bluff, on the eve of the opening of the conference on refugees, intended to facilitate the actions of the Inkotanyi on the ground and to give some consistency to their rantings. The fact remains that this enterprise succeeded with the Rwandans who, in order to convince us of the danger, evidently wrote an "intercepted message" themselves, which was handed to us yesterday (see below).

Colonel Galinié therefore concluded that "the establishment of a second company should not be carried out a priori, but only if the safety of our nationals so requires, which is not the case at present." He combines precision of information with firmness of judgment. But he does not seem to be followed by the political level

through the ambassador and the instructions he receives: “This opinion was defended at length to the ambassador but it seems that he is not totally convinced,” he writes at the end of his message. The close personal and political ties between the French and Rwandan presidents give the latter considerable leverage over the ambassador. On the other hand, the military attaché seems impervious to such pressure, even though it comes, as we have seen, from the top of the State with the faxes found from the deputy to the EMP, Colonel Huchon. It is true that Colonel Galinié is supported in this path of rigor by the Armed Forces Staff, as attested by a fax from Colonel Fruchard sending him a “quite personal” and very important analysis:

The purpose of this message is to give you my analysis of the situation as it may be appreciated for the future of our policy in Rwanda. This analysis is quite personal and is therefore strictly reserved for you. It seems to me that we are at a turning point and that we will have to choose very quickly between three attitudes.

1. Continuation of our current policy. The guerrilla warfare remains confined to the north of the country. President Habyarimana is beginning to make the efforts to open up internally and externally that have been requested of him. In this case we are maintaining our company in Kigali for the protection of our nationals. At the same time, we are helping the Rwandan army to control its problem on the ground through our AMT, as is currently the case. An additional temporary reinforcement by a DAMI is not excluded. I would ask you to give me a quick update on your needs, just in case...

2. A much more reserved commitment. President Habyarimana’s policy of openness remains at the level of rhetoric. There is no evidence of the Ugandan government’s voluntary involvement in the conflict. We adopt an attitude of strict neutrality in the fighting. The sole function of the company in Kigali is to evacuate our nationals, if necessary.

3. Greater engagement. The active participation of the Ugandan government is proven. President Habyarimana began a genuine policy of openness. Our involvement in the crisis became clearer. To what extent? That remains to be defined.

So that’s how I see it. I think that this can help you to better situate your future action. But I could be wrong. Sincerely yours.⁸³⁷

The EMA analyst offers the defense attaché a measured and informed reflection on both the substance and the form. This position of advice is the opposite of the injunctions Colonel Galinié received from the Élysée.

The latter insisted to Colonel Huchon on the need “to remove from power the corrupt ministers and entourage of the head of state, but no one named them. According to the post, these are mainly the president’s brothers-in-law, ministers such as Nzirorera (industry and handicrafts), Ntagerura (public works), and the two deputy chiefs of staff, Colonel Serubuga (Rwandan army) and Colonel Rwagafilita (national gendarmerie).”⁸³⁸ The army staff is aware of the problem, as the example of Colonel Fruchard’s message shows. The presidency of the Republic is also constantly informed of the activities of the extremist and corrupt clan surrounding the Rwandan president through the parallel communication channel set up at the EMP. However, these alerts do not change the presidential policy in Rwanda and the proximity of the two presidents.

A Kigali TD dated 22 July, 1991 is preserved in the archives of the defense attaché Galinié. It precedes his departure from Rwanda by one day. Written by Ambassador Martres, it relates the visit of Paul Dijoud, accompanied by General Huchon and the Rwanda redactor Antoine Anfré, to President Habyarimana on the morning of 18 July. Two points emerge: on the one hand, the repetition of the same alarmist and misleading discourse on the part of a head of State dominated by an ethnicist obsession that makes him see reality through this exclusive prism; on the other hand, Paul Dijoud’s opposition to the holding of a national conference that could have sparked an expected democratic debate and precisely opened up the fortress of ethnicism. On the other hand, the French representative insisted to the Rwandan president on the obligation to concretize “the guarantees promised to promote the return of refugees,” promises that will remain a dead letter:

The president is convinced that Museveni is still not giving up on supporting a rebellion formed essentially by his former companions and brothers in arms. He continues to supply them with arms, of increasing calibre (recently 120 mm mortars). The Rwandans wonder if he will provide them with vehicles. For its part, the group of military observers created by the OAU appears to be completely ineffective and its neutrality is questionable because of its ethnic composition. [...]

Mr. Dijoud then insisted on the danger of a national conference that would inevitably declare itself sovereign and allow all sorts of agitators to take center stage, thus leading to

*disorder and leaving the country in a worsened economic and financial situation.*⁸³⁹

The position of Paul Dijoud expressing that of Colonel Huchon and the Élysée, the two men associating as we have seen through unofficial letters, is particularly revealing of the power of the ethnicist grid crushing the Rwandan reality. The entry through the open nation as proposed by the “national conference” project would push back the ethnicist grip. The idea defended by Colonel Galinié for the Rwandan army goes in the same direction, that of a national and professional institution, with a smaller staff, whose recruitment would be extended to the whole country and not only to the northern regions dominated by Hutu extremism. An army likely to be well trained because of its small number, thus avoiding the creation of an institution that would be uncontrollable professionally and likely to become an armada of militiamen. Colonel Galinié’s conception, as mentioned in the 1998 report by Colonel Le Port, was rejected in favor of a plethoric army with recruitment centered on the northern regions. Believing they were satisfying Habyarimana, the French leaders favored “Hutu Power” without understanding the spiral of militarization.

Did Colonel Galinié’s departure close a field of possibilities that he had worked to build and bring to life? In spite of the pressure that was increasingly being exerted on Colonel Cussac and his even greater isolation, his successor continued to inform Paris of the radicalization of Habyarimana’s regime, of the power of the networks that surrounded him and that were corrupting the institutions, beginning with the armed forces. In particular, he transmitted a document of the utmost importance on 3 December, 1991.

The new defense attaché sent the Operations Center a copy of a communiqué from the FAR’s Directorate of Military Operations.⁸⁴⁰ Colonel Cussac informed them that it had been “read several times on Rwandan radio” and that it appeared that Colonel Serubuga, Deputy Chief of Staff of the FAR, who had not signed it, had endorsed it and allowed it to be broadcast. The defense attaché recalled that “the radio is totally in the hands of the government at the moment” and that “the MRND, the former single party, is losing more and more listeners; this communiqué

therefore appears to be an attempt to radicalize the situation, to provoke a reaction in favor of the MRND.” This communiqué, which is addressed to “Rwandans,” begins with a reminder of the attack on the country “by an enemy from Uganda on 1 October 1990,” repulsed by the FAR on 30 October. Then he develops the thesis of the RPF’s continued threat to Rwanda, with a new strategy “as it has just been exposed” by the “security services.” The response announced by the “Directorate of Military Operations of the Rwandan Armed Forces” is, no more and no less, to initiate a genocidal process.

Since then, the Inyenzy-Inkotanyi⁸⁴¹ have tried by all means to occupy even a part of our territory, to make the world believe that they are in Rwanda. Our Armed Forces kicked them out each time and they returned to their hideouts in Uganda. The enemy was thus defeated despite the unconditional support of Uganda. However, they refuse to acknowledge their defeat and still dream of conquering power in Rwanda, still with the support of the Ugandan government. To achieve its goal, the enemy has changed its strategy.

The communiqué goes into detail about this new strategy, which is to subvert democracy in order to take over the country. The call of the “Directorate of Military Operations” consists, while welcoming the advance of democracy, in denouncing the danger of the democrats who are accomplices of the “Inyenzy-Inkotanyi,” that is to say of the Tutsi since this last expression designates them - and animalizes them. According to the communiqué, the enemies, both external and internal, aim at the disunity of Rwandans, at civil war. The unity of the nation requires that they be flushed out and hunted down. The extremists call for a movement of self-defense and identification of the enemy that wants to “swallow up one by one” the political parties born of the multiparty system, which benefit from the “creation of certain private newspapers in Rwanda, which defend the theses of the enemy and vilify the authority in place.”⁸⁴² The designation of the racial enemy, the exaltation of the cause of the Rwandan nation, the action of the Rwandan Armed Forces and the mobilization of the population are direct factors in the genocidal spiral.

The theme of the unity of the country threatened by the RPF’s Tutsi (“Inyenzy”) offensive (“Inkotanyi”) gives the Hutu extremists a national base and provides them with a very powerful instrument for declaring war on

the Tutsi of the interior and the democratic Hutu. It is all the more so because it is in the hands of some officers of the Rwandan army. Such a mechanism alarmed Colonel Cussac. His dispatch was seen by Colonel Kreher, of the general staff, as indicated by the stamp on the fax received. As far as we know, the information did not reach the DAM or it did not react. No one in French circles seems to have become aware of the seriousness of the threat.

This strategy of national, racial, popular and military struggle was detailed at the same time in an article by the director of ORINFOR, and as such responsible for Rwandan radio, Ferdinand Nahimana. This article was found in the archives that were rushed back to Kigali during Operation Amaryllis.⁸⁴³

Finally, the “copy of a memo addressed by the MDR, PSD and PL parties to the President of the Republic,”⁸⁴⁴ already cited, which Colonel Cussac addressed to the DRM, warned of the responsibility of President Habyarimana and his regime in blocking the democratic process, such as “the failure to complete the judicial investigations [...] all the more so since these investigations implicate him personally or his entourage.”⁸⁴⁵ The joint memo provides damning facts about the involvement of the head of state in the violence, how he “used elements of the public force either to carry out his plans or to give cover to his other civilian forces, notably the militias of the MRND and CDR parties.” It states:

*The moral and material support that certain elements of the Presidential Guard gave to the Interahamwe and CDR militias in their murderous expeditions has been decried several times and the head of State has never taken the complaint of the parties and the population seriously.*⁸⁴⁶

7.3.3.8 INTRANSIGENCE FOR THE DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION. A SERIOUS POLITICAL ERROR?

The arrival of an opposition prime minister at the head of the government did not lead France to commit itself resolutely to the path of democratization. It always seemed to favour a presidential scenario in which Habyarimana would finally opt for democracy. As a result, pressure was systematically exerted on Dismas Nsengiyaremye to come to an agreement with the President and to

recognize the danger that the RPF would pose to national unity, forbidding any rapprochement with the latter. The French game is eminently dangerous and considerably weakens the democratic opposition. President Habyarimana and the hardliners who surround him are reinforced in their rejection of the opposition and in schemes that make it an ally of the RPF, i.e. the enemy within. This shift is deadly when the theme of national unity is invoked, including by France: it legitimizes the denunciation of the democratic Hutu associated with the Tutsi, two minorities deemed to be a threat to Rwanda. Rather than foreseeing a political solution to the Rwandan crisis by supporting the opposition, powerful French actors in the dossier, such as President François Mitterrand's Africa advisor, dismissed it as playing into the hands of the RPF.⁸⁴⁷ The opposition's only destiny would be to join the presidential camp as a support for the MRND or even the CDR. During a trip by a French delegation on 12 February, 1993, the Africa advisor warned the Prime Minister in terms that left little doubt about this French hostility:

Mr. Delaye called, with great insistence, the attention of Mr. Nsengiyaremye to the importance of what was at stake: Rwanda was faced with a project to conquer power that associated President Museveni with a politico-ethnic movement for which pluralist democracy was not a priority. In the face of this project, the majority of Rwandans had to show a common will to stabilize the military situation. The compromise between the president and the internal opposition was a vital necessity. It seemed increasingly ridiculous to discuss the number of portfolios to be allocated to this or that internal party, when the RPF was about to arrive in Kigali. Mr. Delaye then focused his speech on the urgency of a meeting between the president and the prime minister.⁸⁴⁸

Prisoners of their ethnic vision according to which democracy is based on the representation of the "majority people" allowing the exclusion of the Tutsi minority, the French authorities cannot fundamentally admit the existence of a Hutu opposition to Habyarimana. The objective of national unity tends to reinforce the ethnic principle since it can only be the unity of the "majority people." It is possible that the French authorities do not understand the trap in which they are placing themselves by betting on Habyarimana's liberal evolution

rather than by supporting a path of political concord. This is to favor the Hutu extremism that is ensnaring the Rwandan president. The aforementioned article by one of its main ideologues, Ferdinand Nahimana, from February 1993, was re-addressed to the ambassador a year later. No comment was made on its reception at the chancellery,⁸⁴⁹ showing the extent of French incomprehension of the genocidal spiral.

Moreover, by ordering the democratic opposition to treat the RPF as an enemy, France isolates it, destabilizing it without providing it with any further support, and making it increasingly suspect of the RPF leadership. The proof is the fall of Dismas Nsengiyaremye and his Minister of Foreign Affairs Boniface Ngulinzira, the masterminds of the Arusha Accords, but eliminated before they were signed because of the common hostility of the MRND and the RPF towards them. The liberal Hutu became, as researcher Gérard Prunier summed up in 1998 during his hearing before the MIP, “eternal victims,”⁸⁵⁰ discredited by France and even abandoned. Support for the democratic opposition and warnings against Hutu extremism characterized the actions of Colonel Galinié and General Varret at the beginning of the period, leading to a *casus belli* with the Élysée.

At the end of the period, civilian and military aid workers intervened to protect Dismas Nsengiyaremye after he resigned from the government because of serious threats to his life. Magistrate Odette-Luce Bouvier alerted Colonel Robardey, deputy to the defense attaché, to ask him to ensure the evacuation of the former prime minister by plane and to guarantee his safety on the way to the airport. Colonel Cussac and Colonel Maurin were informed and sent an escort of special forces from the DAMI Panda to protect the convoy.⁸⁵¹ Dismas Nsengiyaremye arrived in Paris on 31 July, 1993, where he was reunited with another Hutu democrat, the Minister of Defense Gasana.⁸⁵²

France was mainly absent for the opposition, including during Operation Amaryllis, as the researcher André Guichaoua attested before the MIP. The conditions of the evacuation of the five children of the liberal Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, survivors of the massacre of their parents by the Presidential Guard in the early hours of the genocide, on 7 April, 1994, attest to this.⁸⁵³

7.3.4 *The Unthought of the Tutsi genocide*

From the beginning to the end of the period studied, the same stereotypical views of ethnic groups in Rwanda were repeated in administrative production as in political expression, without any critical distance or awareness on the part of the actors that this was a colonial legacy, in which a disavowal of scientific knowledge underlined the artificial nature of these racial categories instituted by the Belgian colonizer. The reinforcement of the Hutu/Tutsi divide is the result of political factors arising from the “social revolution” of the former engaged in a revenge on the latter. While authoritarian regimes were imposed on Rwandan society, the legal majority became a racial majority, as well as quotas for education and the civil service, and the introduction of identity cards with ethnic references. France, which was heavily involved in Rwanda from October 1990 onwards, adopted a racist vision without realizing the contradiction it created with the democratization project, without understanding that it was in opposition to the principle of the Arusha Accords, and without imagining that it would prevent the genocidal process from being grasped.

7.3.4.1 FRANCE AND ITS ANALYSIS OF RWANDA: A CONCENTRATION OF ETHNICIST VISIONS

The ethnicist vision that the French authorities, both political and administrative, placed on the social and political reality of Rwanda, ran throughout the period and was even reinforced at the end, whereas the genocidal event should have forced an abandonment of such erroneous mental structures.

On 6 April 1990, the defense attaché in Kigali received a copy of a report from an SGDN expert on a mission to Rwanda, Burundi, and Zaire from March 20 to 29, 1990.⁸⁵⁴ The author, Lieutenant-Colonel Paul Vallin, who belonged to the marine troops, explained that “the main interest of this country for France is that it is French-speaking.” Rwanda could thus constitute, along with Zaire and Burundi, “a pillar of our presence that nature and the economy attract to the English-speaking East.”⁸⁵⁵ Annex I of this Report presents “the ethnic groups in Rwanda.” It combines a racist vision of human types in contradiction with the social and political analyses outlined:

Although it is difficult for the uninformed to distinguish between them physically, it seems that the Hutu, with his stocky appearance and his round, thick face, is opposed to the Tutsi, with his slender stature, his very open forehead and his relatively fine features. Both speak the same language, Kinyarwanda, from the Bantu linguistic group, which shows that the Tutsi conquerors adopted the language of the enslaved populations. The Hutu-Tutsi antagonism, because of the atrocities to which it gave rise, survived the takeover by the majority of the population. Thus, there is still discrimination against the Tutsi minority, whose members are virtually unable to gain access to positions of responsibility (government, army).⁸⁵⁶ Four years later, the same stereotypes are still present in the country.

Four years later, the same stereotypes have persisted and their use in analysis has even been reinforced, first at the SGDN, which, as we have seen, persists in the most primitive racist typologies, and also in the office of the Minister of Defense, where the deputy diplomatic advisor Laurent Bili⁸⁵⁷ posits the ethnic factor as the key to understanding the crisis and the French response: “to prevent a minority ethnic group from overthrowing a legal government thanks to foreign assistance.”⁸⁵⁸

A memo from the sub-directorate for Central and Eastern Africa dated 6 May, 1994, aims to draw up “lines of action for France [...] in the face of the Rwandan crisis.”⁸⁵⁹ The same approach defines its content. It concerns “the Rwandan crisis” and fears that “the conflict, particularly in its ethnic dimension, will spread to neighboring countries.” With regard to Rwanda, the memo notes that massacres are being committed by both parties (the two ethnic groups), according to an ethnicist reading that dominates the analysis and does not admit the possibility or even the risk of genocide. On 6 May, it had already begun a month ago.

However, efforts are being made to try to understand the reality of the massacres in Rwanda after 7 April, 1994. These are distinguished first of all according to their seriousness. The acts attributed to the RPF are considered to be “out of all proportion”⁸⁶⁰ to the massacres committed in government zones, as noted by Ambassador Descoueyte from Kampala.⁸⁶¹ The massacres perpetrated by the Hutu militias were distinguished by their “horrific scale,”⁸⁶² as Bruno Delaye explained to François Mitterrand on 18 April, and by “their larger scale,”⁸⁶³ as the Director of African and Malagasy Affairs emphasized on 27 April. The recognition

of genocide appears to be a political necessity but remains a major cognitive problem that seems to be solved by disconnecting the word from its meaning.

7.3.4.2 FRANCE'S RECOGNITION OF GENOCIDE IN MAY 1994

On 16 May, 1994, France, through a statement by Alain Juppé while traveling in Brussels, recognized the genocide underway in Rwanda against the Tutsi. The change in France's tone was significant. Four days earlier, on a visit to Washington, the Minister of Foreign Affairs had still declared: "we have not left Rwanda abandoned for all these years, we have tried to do everything possible to reconcile the tribes, since this is in fact a tribal battle."⁸⁶⁴ On 16 May, as the session of the General Affairs Council of the European Union was about to resume, he told the journalists present:

*What is being perpetrated in Rwanda at the moment deserves the name of genocide. The massacres are appalling, especially in the area held by government forces. In the European Union's declaration on Rwanda, which will be distributed to you shortly, the word "genocide" will appear, which I wanted to see included.*⁸⁶⁵

It details the four lines of action of "the international community and France [...] in the face of this unbearable situation," emergency humanitarian aid, deployment of an international humanitarian force, support for mediators in the region, including the three heads of State of Uganda, Burundi and Zaire, and lastly, repression of human rights violations "which have reached a degree that I have described as unbearable, and which I have also described as genocide."

*We intend to ask the High Commissioner for Human Rights to make proposals in this sense. This idea is also included in the European Union's declaration on Rwanda.*⁸⁶⁶

The declaration marks France's recognition of the genocide, whose perpetrators as well as victims are implicitly designated. It also reveals Alain Juppé's personal involvement in this recognition, which the administration at the Quai did not propose to the minister. "Elements of language" were sent to him on the same day, certainly in anticipation of the Brussels meeting. Director Jean-Marc de La Sablière described the "appalling tragedy"

in Rwanda, with massacres whose number of victims “exceeds, according to the testimonies we have received, the abuses already committed in this unfortunate country where the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups are unable to coexist.” These elements of language, which repeat the doxa of the inter-ethnic massacre, hardly allow the minister to project himself towards an analysis of the events in terms of genocide. Only a mention, which would then have to be carefully interpreted, could lead the minister to conceive of such a reality if he were to rely solely on the “elements of language” prepared by the Department:

These abuses are unacceptable, undignified. These are exceptionally serious human rights violations. While summary executions have been carried out on both sides, the massacres in government-held areas are systematic and on a massive scale. The United Nations Human Rights Commission will hold a special meeting on Rwanda. An investigation must be carried out, the culprits must be named and punished, and the international community must draw the consequences.

The speech of the Minister Delegate in charge of Humanitarian Action and Human Rights, delivered in Geneva at the United Nations on 24 May, 1994, was even more explicit about the recognition of genocide, although it seemed to be a bit vague.⁸⁶⁷

On 6 April an attack destroyed the plane of the Rwandan President, killing him and the President of Burundi. It will be necessary to shed light on the responsibilities of this act that set the world on fire. The very next day, massacres of Tutsi and Hutu close to the opposition, including the Prime Minister, were perpetrated by elements of the Presidential Guard and Rwandan troops.⁸⁶⁸

Lucette Michaux-Chevry wonders: “Why does the interim government not condemn all these massacres with all the vigour that is required? Is it doing everything in its power to ensure that the perpetrators of these massacres put an end to them without delay?” She implies here that the IRG was not responsible for the genocide, denying the precise information on the full responsibility of its members in the extermination of the Tutsi. She goes on to question the actions of the other side: “Why doesn’t the RPF react to the abuses in the area it controls? Indeed, testimonies indicate that serious violations of humanitarian law and human rights are taking place in this zone, where new abuses have reportedly taken place recently.”⁸⁶⁹

The equivalence between the massacres that the Minister seems to indicate is denied at the same time by the observations of French representatives on the ground, including Ambassador Yannick Gérard.⁸⁷⁰ However, she went on to insist on the need to identify those “responsible for the atrocities” by warning them “that they will be judged and punished”⁸⁷¹ and that they will be “forever disqualified from negotiating the future of their country.”⁸⁷² She concludes on “the path to follow to prevent new massacres, in the immediate future and also once peace has returned. We cannot be satisfied with the alleged inevitability of the resurgence of ethnic hatred. This is not acceptable.”⁸⁷³ The Minister rejects this “alleged inevitability” but does not reject the explanation of “ethnic hatreds” as shown by both the insistence on RPF abuses and the reluctance to clearly qualify the Tutsi genocide.

7.3.4.3 THE ETHNICIST READING AND THE WORD GENOCIDE: A LOSS OF MEANING IN JUNE 1994

Insidiously, step by step, the word genocide recedes in official French statements in favor of the denunciation of “massacres” committed by both sides, until the text of the resolution charging Operation Turquoise with “stopping the massacres.”⁸⁷⁴ On 1 June, 1994, Alain Juppé answered a current affairs question in the National Assembly. He began by stating that he had “had the opportunity before this assembly to denounce and condemn the massacres that had been perpetrated on both sides, starting with the militias that had acted in the areas controlled by the government forces.”⁸⁷⁵ It should be noted that at the opening of his speech on 18 May before the deputies, to which he refers, Alain Juppé stated

*The systematic destruction of an ethnic group is the definition of genocide. This is why, like you, Mr. Millon, I myself used this term a few days ago, since this is what Rwanda is all about. Faced with the offensive of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, the Rwandan government troops engaged in a systematic elimination of the Tutsi population, which then led to widespread massacres.*⁸⁷⁶

The statement is eloquent, but it is already ambiguous as to whether genocide occurred in response to the “RPF offensive,” which led to “the generalization of massacres.”

Presented in this way, “the systematic elimination of the Tutsi population” does not fall within the definition of genocide to which Alain Juppé refers and is part of a spiral of inter-ethnic massacres reacting to events but not part of a process of radicalization, racialization, methodical targeting of a population destined to be exterminated, and then of organization and planning. The Minister puts forward “the definition of genocide,” but does not assume it in the historical and legal terms set by the Convention of 9 December, 1948. This lack of rigor may indicate a lack of knowledge of the international treaties signed by France. It may also reflect the government’s concern not to question the actions of the powers that be prior to the genocide. The latter also made the same mistake about genocide, which disqualified the use of the term. At the Select Defense Committee of 22 April, 1994, François Mitterrand made the following statement:

*We must not fail to denounce the genocide perpetrated by the Hutu. The madness took hold of them after the assassination of President Habyarimana.*⁸⁷⁷

The President of the Republic added: “Mr. Minister of Defense, Admiral, I want to be kept permanently informed.” The Prime Minister replied: “That will not stop them...” As with the statement of 18 May by his Minister of Foreign Affairs, the facts cannot be defined as genocide, whose primary characteristic is to be methodically prepared and planned, as opposed to a massacre that is a response to a situation that is characterized as an act of collective “madness.” The thesis of irrational and spontaneous behavior at the origin of killings is the opposite of the definition of the genocidal enterprise. Moreover, this notion of “madness” clears the perpetrators who would not be in a normal state, who could not, in a certain way, be held responsible for their acts, which were caused by a traumatic external event, “the assassination of President Habyarimana.” For the French head of State, the paternity of the attack belongs to the RPF, as indicated in another statement to the same select committee: “the Tutsi will establish a military dictatorship to impose themselves durably and, disillusioned, a dictatorship based on 10% of the population will govern with new massacres.” This presidential analysis definitively nullifies

his reflection on the genocide and its necessary denunciation. The shift to the theme of massacres, especially those of the RPF, brings the analysis back to ethnicist interpretations.

Without the possibility of analyzing the process leading to genocide, there is no genocide in the sense of the Convention. In order to comply with the 1948 French definition, it would be necessary to analyze the events prior to the paroxysmal phase of April-June 1994, which seems unimaginable and perhaps unthinkable. The French declarations of May and June 1994 on the genocide in Rwanda do not, in any case, constitute an act of recognition of the genocide of the Tutsi; they ignore the definition of genocide. They seem to be motivated above all by a concern to be in step with public opinion, which wants to hear this word that ends up disappearing from the public communication of the French authorities, as can be seen from the statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the National Assembly on 1 June, then that of the Ministry on 11 June⁸⁷⁸ and the joint communiqué of the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister.⁸⁷⁹ On 13 June, however, on the sidelines of the General Affairs Council in Luxembourg, Alain Juppé took up the definition of genocide, making a personal commitment:

*We cannot continue to allow such an abominable genocide to be perpetrated, I am using this term again, because I believe that from the moment that one sets out to decimate a population because it belongs to a certain ethnic group, one is indeed in the very definition of genocide.*⁸⁸⁰

This demand is reiterated in an article he wrote to the *Libération* newspaper at the same time and which was published on 16 June.

*Today, Rwanda is facing a conflict that is both ethnic and political. We must speak of genocide, because there is a deliberate desire on the part of active militias in government zones to kill Tutsi, men, women, children, the wounded, and clerics, solely because of their ethnic origin. But at the same time, a merciless struggle for power is being waged, in which the moderates have been the first victims of the Hutu extremists and in which the military wing of the RPF has chosen total and uncompromising victory.*⁸⁸¹

In the course of his writing, Alain Juppé shifted, imperceptibly but decisively, consciously or not, from denouncing the genocide against the Tutsi to demanding that “those responsible for these genocides be put on trial.”⁸⁸² The affirmation of this plurality of genocides, as there are massacres between Tutsi and Hutu, suggests that France

conceives of an extermination of the Hutu by the Tutsi, the application of a program of ethnic cleansing and the realization of a “Tutsiland.” We know that this is the shared fear at the Élysée. This disturbing discrepancy overshadows Alain Juppé’s commitments to support “the moderates who, despite the persecution they have suffered, have survived” and “the share” that “France intends to take” in the common effort to “put an end to the Rwandan tragedy.”⁸⁸³

Already the day before, on 15 June, two days after his Luxembourg declaration, during a press briefing by the Minister after his hearing by the Foreign Affairs Commission of the National Assembly, Alain Juppé had backed down to the point of adopting the language of the President of the Republic. He recalled the assassination of the Rwandan and Burundian presidents “which triggered the bloody madness and genocide, first in the government ranks, due to Hutu extremists, and then, it must be said, as the RPF advanced towards the south of the country.”⁸⁸⁴ The term genocide now only describes massacres committed by both sides, and it is the worsening of the latter that should lead France to intervene.⁸⁸⁵

7.3.4.4 THE DOGMAS OF “INTER-ETHNIC MASSACRE” AND “CIVIL WAR”

An examination of the countless exchanges between the various political, military and diplomatic bodies acting on behalf of the French State on the Rwanda issue, particularly in analyses and reports, reveals a determining representation shared by the various French protagonists who were in charge during the years 1990-1994.

This dominant representation conveyed by the official discourse concerns the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and its military counterpart, the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), which were considered “enemies” of both Rwanda and France. In the same vein, as a consequence of this representation, the abuses and massacres regularly committed against the Rwandan Tutsi during these years are most often presented as inter-ethnic massacres, the identification of the victims and sometimes even of the executioners not always being clear in the TDs or the reports

sent to Paris. The general approach oscillates between minimization of the facts or simply a complicit silence, probably intended to exonerate Rwandan friends from these crimes and not to provide the RPF with arguments that could justify its repeated interventions in Rwandan territory. In fact, there are no reports in the archives linking localized massacres committed by the Rwandan army or militias attached to the presidential party, the MRND, or to the extremists of the CDR, to attacks launched by the RPF from Uganda. The deaths attributable to the RPF in the areas it occupies are never presented for what they are, i.e., most often reprisals aimed primarily at the perpetrators of massacres, clearly identified local MRND and CDR cadres, even if gratuitous abuses are sometimes observed. The French discourse presents mass massacres carried out by the FAR or Hutu factions close to the government on the same level as reprisals carried out by the RPF, omitting to say that the latter are the consequence of the former, and that the massacres of Tutsi are on a completely different scale than the violence committed by the RPF. The terminology used, which at best blurs the lines of responsibility, supports the official position.

It should also be noted that the French discourse remains dominated by the certainty of the permanent danger that the RPF represents, for the security of the Rwandan State as well as for the policy that France wants to conduct in the Great Lakes Region. In the end, this discourse gives rise to a vision centered on the balance of power and military issues, while domestic Rwandan politics are secondary. Even during the negotiations that led to the Arusha Accords, which were supposed to bring peace to Rwanda, the French discourse remained eminently hostile to the RPF, with whose representatives Paris was rarely willing to engage in dialogue. This construction of danger, repeated daily in French archival documents, particularly during periods of crisis, allowed certain Parisian circles to construct a discourse that had the appearance of rationality. Political decisions, such as sending or keeping French forces in Rwanda, are inspired by this biased representation.

This conception of the Rwandan conflict defended in Paris is all the more condemnable since certain observers in the field regularly

alert the Parisian authorities to the political situation in Rwanda and the threats that weigh on the Tutsi population as well as on opponents of all stripes.

7.3.4.5 A RELATIONSHIP WITH REALITY THAT IS DYING

The positioning of the executive branch is determined by these interpretation frameworks applied to the “Rwandan crisis,” frameworks that are extremely rigid, particularly at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The forced departure of the Rwanda redactor, Antoine Anfré, marked the end of analytical and critical thinking at the DAM, while in Kigali, the diplomatic post multiplies the contradictory memos and TDs that end up preventing thought. The intellectual production of the State says nothing about the reality of the situation, contenting itself with repeating and illustrating the three axes of the dominant thinking among political and administrative decision-makers:

- President Habyarimana remains an essential partner, especially in the perspective of negotiating and concluding the Arusha Accords;
- the RPF cannot, or never will be able to be a partner in Rwanda’s future because of the Tutsi minority’s strategy of seizing power, and this absolute mistrust reflects on the opposition parties, which are considered to be *inkotanyi* vanguards.
- if there was violence perpetrated against the population, it was an invariable “inter-ethnic massacre” that the French military presence tended to limit.

The preceding chapters expose and document this dominant interpretation, making the very idea of systematic ethnic persecution inconceivable. The facts reported in relation to the systematic persecutions suffered by the Tutsi are rejected in principle, by virtue of the interpretation framework. We can observe, through the professional destinies of the defense attaché, René Galinié, or the Rwanda redactor, Antoine André, the risks incurred by government agents who deviate from this interpretation. When the grip of this framework was loosened in favor of an alternative policy, starting in May 1994 under the impetus of François Léotard, favoring the recognition of the genocide of the Tutsi and a de-demonization of the RPF,⁸⁸⁶ diplomats who were solid in their convictions dared to use force, or even conflict. This

was the case in particular for Yannick Gérard, but also for the director of the DGSE, who sent a team of agents to the RPF as it advanced towards Kigali.

The military chiefs of staff also became more confident in the face of the omnipotence of the EMP associated with the MMC. Prior to this period of loosening of the dominant interpretations, there were discreet but subtle initiatives on the part of military personnel, diplomats and political advisors that could be described as courageous, given the weight of the dominant representations in the French State.⁸⁸⁷

7.3.4.6 INCONCEIVABLE WARNINGS. THE RPF UNINTELLIGIBLE FOR FRANCE

The RPF warned of the highly racialized nature of the repression that followed the offensive of 1 October 1990. In its view, it is far from being limited to arrests of opponents and human rights violations, as the French authorities are trying to present and minimize. Documents and analyses of the RPF, which history will unfortunately confirm, insist on the ethnic hatred that is developing against the Tutsi and the trap of national unity directed against the “enemies of the nation.” The Socialist deputy Jean-Michel Belorgey, president of the Commission on Cultural, Family and Social Affairs, wrote a very complete report on “the outbreaks of persecution to which the Tutsi ethnic minority is subjected in this country, persecutions that are carried out, if not on the initiative, at least with the tacit approval and covert support of the public authorities, who also tend to take advantage of the material support and moral backing of the French military forces sent to protect our nationals.”⁸⁸⁸ This file comes from the work of the French Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Rwanda⁸⁸⁹ whose president, Jean Carbonare, once again contacted⁸⁹⁰ the deputy and committee chairman.⁸⁹¹ The file includes a memo from the Goma correspondent of the “*Agence de presse du Front patriotique Rwandais - Inkotanyi?*” established in Gabiro, dated 23 December, 1990, giving information obtained from “a hundred or so Tutsi and Hutu refugees who had arrived in Goma in recent days.” The latter provide information on some of the criteria that were decisive in the arrests and imprisonment followed by numerous abuses perpetrated by agents of the gendarmerie, the

security forces and militants of the *Mouvement révolutionnaire national pour le développement* (MRND). The list of criteria⁸⁹² corresponds well to the “definition of the enemy” outlined above, at a time when such ideological statements had not yet been made. In practice, this systematic targeted persecution had begun, and was carried out jointly by militants of the single party and by agents of the State. Another RPF document provides information on events up to 22 November, 1990, showing how the repression of the Rwandan State following the 1 October offensive took on a racial character from the outset, targeting the Tutsi minority under the fire of “incitement to ethnic hatred [...] which became the *raison d’être* of certain newspapers such as “*Kangura*” (“Wake up”), “*Umuranga*” and “*Tjamba*” and the national Radio’s campaign “against the ‘enemies of the nation.’”⁸⁹³

The study of the documentation received reveals, according to Jean-Michel Belorgey, “the most salient features of these persecutions.” The letter ends with the observation that France contributed to the policy of persecution through military assistance and moral support granted to the regime in place. Jean-Michel Belorgey does not specify whether this contribution was voluntary or involuntary, because he is unaware. However, with the letter from the deputy - duly received by the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs⁸⁹⁴ and transmitted to the DAM for “a draft [reply] for the signature of the M. [Minister]” - and Roland Dumas’s reply dated 10 February, 1992, it is possible to consider that the Minister of Foreign Affairs was now aware of a dual situation: in addition to the systematic violations of human rights by Habyarimana’s regime, there was a systematic racial persecution of the Tutsi minority; this persecution was the work of political networks, but it was also the work of the Rwandan government’s own regular administrations.

The fact that the letter comes from a deputy, who is also the president of a commission, gives the letter the value of a transmission of information from the legislative power to the executive power. The latter cannot deny that it was not informed. The way in which this information, like all the information transmitted by parliamentarians to ministers on the subject, is assimilated by the latter must be studied. This study is based on an examination of the replies sent to parliamentarians or to the presidents of human rights associations alerting

them to the deterioration of the situation in Rwanda.⁸⁹⁵ The response of Minister Roland Dumas to Deputy Belorgey evades the substantive questions.⁸⁹⁶

As with the warnings concerning the growing risks of French involvement in Rwanda - including the CAP reports by Jean-François Leguil-Bayart with the very negative reaction of the French ambassador - those that emphasized the racial radicalization of the regime and the threat of extermination of the Tutsi were at best opposed, at worst ignored.

For the former, the most significant documents concern reports emanating from the RPF or its movement, including that of "Pierre Rubibi" or the one preceding it, namely a "Notice of protest against the genocide organized by the power in Kigali" dated 12 March, 1992, coming from the Rwandan community that had taken refuge in Burundi and transmitted to the Directorate of African and Malagasy Affairs on 17 March, 1992. Alternating between a laudatory presentation of the RPF and a demonstration of a deeply racist regime that was open to highly organized pogroms of Tutsi, this report successively addresses "discrimination, the mode of government of the Habyarimana regime," "the current war, a revealing factor," and finally "the motives for the current genocide in Bugesera and in other regions of the country."⁸⁹⁷

7.3.4.7 THE CASE OF THE RUBIBI REPORT

On 5 May, 1992, the office of the Minister Delegate in charge of Foreign Affairs, Georges Kiejman, sent the Rwanda redactor of the DAM the "Report of Mr. Pierre Rubibi" transmitted by Mr. Pierre Bourguignon, Member of Parliament. On the dispatch memo, Antoine Anfré⁸⁹⁸ wrote, "very interesting." Indeed, the report, signed by a pseudonym,⁸⁹⁹ was very well informed and also very accusatory of France, which explains why the diplomat was obviously not able to exploit it or even use it as the basis for an alert. The objective of the Kibilira intellectual is to alert this "representative of the people, because my country, small and poor, with no historical ties to yours prior to independence, does not seem to interest the media and public opinion in your country, contrary to the decisive opinion of the Belgian people who victoriously forced the government of this country (yet ex-administrative power) to renounce all military interventionism, in order

to facilitate the mediation task of the OAU (Organization of African Unity) supported by the countries surrounding mine.”

The propaganda objective is clear, but apart from certain assertions (the secret repatriation of the remains of French legionnaires, the role played by Alexis Kanyarengwe and Pastor Bizimungu within the RPF, where they never exercised real power), most of the information it contains is accurate. With appendices and detailed references from a variety of sources, the report is presented as a “quick overview of Rwanda’s history” emphasizing the “same language” and “same culture, which are essential elements of nation-building.” The upheavals of independence resulted in “coldly pitting the Hutu masses against the Tutsi masses, although economically indistinguishable, but demagogically differentiated by the new Hutu leaders for the needs of their cause.” The author shows that this cause was able to capture the theme of democratization and impose “a false definition of democracy.” This “continues to this day to legitimize any potentate by the simple fact of belonging to the majority ethnic group and to shed the blood of innocent Tutsi peasant masses.” The report’s assessment of these ethnic confrontations of the late 1950s emphasizes that the “Hutu Republic” created in 1961 was “more concerned with ethnic cohesion around the principle of hatred against the minority Tutsi than with the unity of the Rwandan people.”⁹⁰⁰

The report then focuses on the armed conflict between the regime of President Habyarimana and the RPF, insisting on the pretext given by this war to organize “a committee in charge of the extermination of the Tutsi” at the level of each commune and to implement them, adding

A priest from the Kibilira commune phoned the French Embassy and warned it of the events on 12.10.1990 before noon. “Our military cannot intervene, but we will report it to the Rwandan authorities, was the reply.”⁹⁰¹ The mission of our military is to evacuate as many of our nationals who wish to leave the country as possible.”

For the author of the report, the cease-fires and then the peace agreements did not prevent General Habyarimana, “strengthened by the support of the French government,” from promising the Rwandan army “to avenge his comrades killed by the enemy [...]” The promised vengeance was

carried out. And he cites the systematic massacres in the Mutara region in October 1990, followed by new massacres in November in the town and region of Gabiro, and at the beginning of the following year with “the collective massacre of 1,400 Bagogwe peasants” in the Ruhengeri region, decided by President Habyarimana and his three brothers-in-law.⁹⁰² Pierre Rubibi raises a very interesting element of the genocidal process, namely the fact that massacres of civilian populations are undertaken to compensate for defeats in the face of regular adversaries. The more the armed forces suffer such defeats, the more they wage a new war, this time of extermination, against the enemy within. The mechanism was well observed, starting from that time, by historians of the genocide of the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁰³

The report points out the French responsibilities that contributed to “covering up a genocide,” both by granting military and political support to a racist regime that allowed it to use its armed forces for massacres or to support massacres since the security of the country was ensured by French contingents, and by remaining silent about the situation in Rwanda. In this regard, the author cites an article by French researcher Jean-Pierre Chrétien, “Le régime de Kigali et l’intervention française: sortir du silence” (The Regime in Kigali and French Intervention: Ending the Silence). The role of the French military units appears to be essential because of their capacity to train the FAR but also to plan their combat against the RPF. With regard to the massacres of Tutsi in Bugesera, which were taking place at the same time as he was writing his report, Pierre Rubibi noted the active participation of soldiers from the Presidential Guard “dressed in civilian clothes, accompanied by a few fanatics of the regime (led by a member of the family of the president’s wife... called Léon Mbonabary)”: “I would point out that the Presidential Guard was made available by the presence of the French troops guarding the capital and the presidential family.”⁹⁰⁴

Pierre Rubibi also points to the active role of French diplomacy through the French ambassador and “a senior official from Paris called Paul Dijoud who, for the particular case of Rwanda, would receive direct instructions from the Élysée.” The author seems to be well informed, as his analysis is consistent with the facts observed by the Commission. Paul Dijoud’s objectives would have been to keep the OAU away from the dossier and to frustrate attempts at direct negotiations between France and the RPF.

He calls on France, and also on Belgium, to stop promoting an “Ethnic State” in the name of democracy and to commit itself instead to satisfying “vital needs: bread, peace and unity,” in other words, to approach Rwanda according to political, economic, and sociological analyses rather than persisting in an ethnicist and warmongering vision. He concludes his report with “recommendations”:

*The French administration should withdraw completely from the Rwandan crisis, let the OAU and the neighboring countries hosting the refugees resume their mediation between the RPF and the government of General Habyarimana for an immediate cease-fire and the respect of the entire N'Sele agreement signed by both parties. To do otherwise would be to prolong the suffering of the Rwandan people who are looking for a vision of society. Not on the scale of one ethnic group, even if it is the majority, but on the scale of the entire people, brought together and reconciled forever.*⁹⁰⁵

Other recommendations concern in particular the warnings coming from the RPF, or the human rights associations in Rwanda as well as the Rwandan communities in exile in Europe, which are always assimilated to Tutsi propaganda arms. Leaving aside the argument that history has now vindicated these dissident agents of the State, these parliamentarians, associations and researchers, it is necessary to point out that at the time, no proposal to verify the information coming from these circles was made to our knowledge, nor, if not, was it followed up by an investigation. There is no record of the implementation of such procedures, even though they are elementary in a State of law and a system of knowledge.⁹⁰⁶ In a way, this information cannot be real and, therefore, the alerts that reveal it are null and void. It is appropriate not to respond to them, to deny them any reality. Roland Dumas' response to Jean-Michel Belorgey can be read as a refusal to think about and even to name the systematic anti-Tutsi persecutions that are the subject of the deputy's letter.

The files of the presidential collection contain a fax⁹⁰⁷ dated 28 March, 1994 addressed to the President of the United Nations Security Council by the President of the RPF. Colonel Alexis Kanyarengwe warns of President Habyarimana's policy of over-armament “despite the signing of the peace agreement between the RPF and the Rwandan government” and of the accelerated distribution of arms to the population

at the initiative of his regime. The message ends with an indictment of France, “which is currently supplying part of these 85 tons of arms to President Habyarimana.”⁹⁰⁸ The final attack on France is likely to convince the African Affairs advisor that the letter is part of the strategy he is following for the RPF. The alert is therefore of no value to Élysée officials; it is part of the RPF’s strategy to seize power, which involves the mobilization of all means, starting with disinformation. However, it describes a situation that could have allowed the United Nations to take other decisions from 7 April, 1994, than the reduction of UNAMIR, and for France to consider other missions on behalf of the Amaryllis force, once an awareness of the preparation of organized massacres was acquired. The relationship to the facts and to reality is essentially dependent on the dominant effect of unilateral frameworks of interpretation in force in the French public institutions in charge of Rwanda.

7.3.4.8 THE RISK OF AN UNTENABLE MISSION.

In order not to make the renunciation of the term genocide too visible, the Minister of Foreign Affairs uses the expression “extermination” as in his interview with France 2 on 16 June.⁹⁰⁹ The fact remains that the use of the concept becomes impossible both from a diplomatic point of view - because it would mean breaking a form of neutrality between the massacres, their perpetrators and the victims - and for a logical reason: a genocide cannot define cross-ethnic massacres. This intellectual rift, of which the Minister is probably aware and which cannot be resolved without upsetting the certainties displayed by France, will make the Turquoise mission highly perilous for the personnel sent to the field. This was noted above in the study of reports from August 1994 and rushes transcribed by the Research Commission, but also, with Chapter 5, the ambiguity of Operation Turquoise at its inception, as if a humanitarian operation had to be programmed in order to prevent the project of a military intervention against the RPF in the logic of *Noroît*. The Prime Minister demanded a change in approach to Rwanda. The implementation is complex. The balance seems to be to stick to a strict duty

to protect the population. To a journalist who questioned him at the press briefing on 15 June, 1994, the minister evaded the question and remained ambiguous about the mission to come:

Q: Would it be to intervene in the genocide or would it be to intervene in interposition, between the combatants?

*A: It is a matter of protecting the populations and I will say no more about it today.*⁹¹⁰

The initial ambiguity of the Turquoise mission was corrected from Paris with the authority that the Prime Minister intended to exercise over the operation, and on the ground with the engagement of General Lafourcade and his deputies, the heads of groups. He is also assisted by the two ambassadors, Yannick Gérard and Jacques Warin, and the advisor Jean-Christophe Belliard, as well as by the ambassador Jean-Michel Marlaud. As in Kampala, the former is working to bring French diplomacy face to face with the truth of the facts.

7.3.4.9 FROM KAMPALA TO GOMA: AN AMBASSADOR'S FIGHT FOR THE TRUTH

Since Kampala, as we have seen, Yannick Gérard has endeavored throughout the period under study to get his superiors to find out about the reality of the RPF, or at least to consider its objectives as the movement defines them. As early as 1990, the content of his diplomatic correspondence overturned the dominant frameworks of analysis of Rwanda retained by the Quai d'Orsay. Although operating from Uganda, Yannick Gérard observes the Rwandan reality very closely thanks to direct contacts with the RPF and the Ugandan authorities - on which he exercises his critical sense. But the very fact of considering the movement and informing about the rapprochement he wishes to achieve with the French government, can lead to him being labeled pro-RPF or even "Tutsi." His fieldwork did not emerge in the DAM's memos and his deputy in Kampala, Antoine Anfré, who was appointed to the headquarters in 1991, was quickly ostracized by the management. In turn, Yannick Gérard left Kampala for Paris where, in 1993, he became Jean-Marc de La Sablière's deputy in the African and Malagasy Affairs Division. During Operation Turquoise, he was in charge of a mission with Jean-Christophe Belliard and Ambassador Warin; they went to Goma and the SHZ between 30 June and 25 July, 1994.

Their role was to bring diplomacy to an operation set up by

the military, to insist on the humanitarian dimension of Turquoise and to provide regular updates to the DAM. This is how Yannick Gérard met the IRG authorities in Gisenyi. They were very critical of Turquoise and the creation of the SHZ, and a long meeting took place in a very tense atmosphere.⁹¹¹ The firmness of the Deputy Director of African and Malagasy Affairs left no room for hesitation on his part, nor the slightest understanding of the demands and concerns expressed: the Turquoise mission has an exclusively humanitarian goal and there is no question of distributing the weapons requested; the ambassador insists on the promise acquired the day before to stop all attacks by the Radio des Mille Collines against UNAMIR.⁹¹² Faced with the aggressive attitude of the President and the government, Gérard did not give in and spoke with authority, but he concluded his telegram by saying that he was unable to interpret President Sindikubwabo's hope to meet him again. The tone of the exchanges is far from complacent.

He gave daily updates on his contacts, the progress of the installation, the difficult relations between the army and humanitarian organizations, and occasionally awaited instructions from Paris. The government in Gisenyi affirmed its hostility to the presence of Belgians, even if it was in the form of medical aid, so their safety was not guaranteed unless they placed themselves under the protection of General Lfourcade, who himself could probably not express any reservations, and the diplomat took charge of this: "I nevertheless draw the attention of the Department [to the fact that] if General Lfourcade himself had to ensure the protection of the Belgians in particular against the FAR (who according to what I am told remain quite present in this area) or the militiamen, this would be as many resources less available to him for the rest of the operations. That would pose a real problem for him."⁹¹³ The Ministry did not respond.

Yannick Gérard was very moved by the dramatic humanitarian situation that he described in several telegrams.⁹¹⁴ When the IRG fell on 4 July, priorities had to be re-evaluated: Rwanda had to be thought of "in the perspective of a broad government of national unity in Kigali as announced by General Kagame,"⁹¹⁵ and international organizations had to be encouraged to go to the whole country and not just to the Safe Humanitarian Zone. Incentives for the return of displaced populations are needed and France must work on this "in the

name of the humanitarian issues at stake and whatever one thinks politically,”⁹¹⁶ by establishing a “close dialogue that is as trusting as possible with the RPF leaders,”⁹¹⁷ in order to make reassuring joint statements. Yannick Gérard insists: “our humanitarian concern should take precedence over our prejudices towards the RPF.”⁹¹⁸ For him, there is no alternative, the RPF is the only interlocutor, even if the IRG, the FAR, and the radio continue to denounce the threats it poses. On the subject of the broadcasts of the “Radio des Mille Collines, which is once again broadcasting from Gisenyi,” he notes the following themes, which he summarizes in a TD Kigali of 11 July 1994: an extreme ethnicization of statements,⁹¹⁹ virulent attacks on the RPF, calls for vigilance on the part of the militias, as well as on the MRND, which “remains the party of the people,” diatribes against UNAMIR “which has allowed the RPF to infiltrate Kigali, criticism of the embargo that “the Hutu are victims of” and that risks leading to a massive exodus “to neighboring countries,” the thinly veiled denunciation of France, which has not intervened either in Kigali or in Rushashi.

The urgency of the situation that preoccupied the diplomat prompted him to give this telegram to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to read. However, while contacts with the RPF were made locally by Turquoise officers, and even encouraged, nothing was done at the government level. Clearly, “our prejudices towards the RPF” persist, he wrote.

The situation, which was unbearable in human terms, was getting worse, and alarmed the two ambassadors. Yannick Gérard is worried about the exodus of people from the SHZ to Zaire, when they should be invited to return home. “Tens of thousands of Rwandans will die of thirst, hunger and epidemics in the days and weeks to come.”⁹²⁰ For him, this is a “suicidal exile” - and this term comes up several times in the days that follow. He paints a worrying picture of the Zairian forces, of the dispersal of weapons taken from the FAR, but points out that the RPF has apologized to the local authorities for the mortars that fell on Goma. In the SHZ, he praises the work of Turquoise and notes the disarmament of the FAR and the militiamen “whenever possible,” as well as the “increasingly numerous RPF infiltrations by small groups.”⁹²¹

Yannick Gérard insists on the need for political dialogue in the face of the humanitarian crisis: this is what preoccupies him in all the telegrams he sends to the Department in the days that follow:

“Only urgent and realistic political action by the international community, in liaison with the new government in Kigali, aimed at the return of Rwandan populations to their regions of origin, would be likely to prevent the certain additional death of hundreds of thousands of Rwandans in the weeks to come.” It was also necessary to denounce more clearly (“it is up to France to set an example”⁹²²) the responsibility of the IRG “not only in the genocide of April/May, but also in the current situation.” He added the next day that “the duty of the international community is to contribute to this [the return of the populations] in liaison with the government in Kigali and by driving a wedge between these innocent populations and those who have governed them so badly.”⁹²³

Could Yannick Gérard’s lucidity with regard to the former authorities in Kigali, and the consideration he always showed towards the RPF, have led to tensions, or even to a truncated definition of humanitarian aid? For example, General Lafourcade mentions a dispute that the two men had:

*I had a dispute with the ambassador concerning a distribution of food aid to FAR refugees in Zaire. On 21 July, at the request of the WFP, I distributed food to the FAR out of the French humanitarian aid that I manage. The refugee soldiers and their families were in a critical situation with many injured and dying. Ambassador Gérard admonished me, insinuating that I should not have done so because they were FAR. The next day, the WFP renewed its request by providing food aid. We distributed it again. I told the ambassador that I was very surprised over the sorting faced with the suffering, the hungry, and the dying in a critical humanitarian situation.*⁹²⁴

7.3.4.10 MAJOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CAPACITY TO INFORM AND ACT IN A GENOCIDAL SITUATION

The role of Ambassador Gérard in the Turquoise zone and the Great Lakes region, which should be compared with the actions of his diplomatic colleagues Descoueyte in Kampala and Belliard as well as Warin on mission, and his previous action in Uganda, raises questions about “the capacity to inform” in a genocidal situation. These questions were put forward as soon as the event occurred, and this capacity to question corrected, only in part, the French inability to have thought about the genocide and

its preparation. At the end of the study that General Wiroth wrote on 29 August, 1994, concerning the FIDH report on human rights violations in Rwanda, the deputy director of the DAS wrote

Lastly, M. Carbonare, one of the authors of the report, stated in a meeting that a number of French civilians or military personnel working in Rwanda sought to alert the French authorities through the Embassy or professional organizations, apparently without success.⁹²⁵ The organization of the mechanisms that were to be at the origin of the 1994 massacres from the highest level of the Rwandan State (presidency of the Republic, army staff) makes it necessary to question the capacity of the representatives of the French administrations present in the various spheres of Rwandan power to inform, as well as the conditions for informing the French public authorities.⁹²⁶

The same recommendations on the importance of a method of thought capable of rising to the intellectual and even cognitive challenges imposed by the irruption of the genocidal fact are outlined by several of the authors in the corpus in Part 3.

7.3.5 Tensions on careers

7.3.5.1 BEING A REDACTOR AT THE DAM

The “personal memos” of Antoine Anfré, the Rwanda redactor assigned to the DAM in April 1991, while the director was Paul Dijoud and the deputy directors in charge of Central and East Africa were Jean-Paul Taïx and then Catherine Boivineau, led to his marginalization, as shown by his very severe administrative rating by his superiors one year later. The Research Commission wished to verify whether the writing of the “personal memos” had an impact on Antoine Anfré’s career. The documents consulted are enlightening. In 1992, when he was evaluated for his activity within the DAM, his grade dropped sharply, which was not only due to the necessary weighting implied by the introduction of the “FANEV form”⁹²⁷ that year. This significant drop corresponds to the content of the written comments, signed by Paul Dijoud: they are very damning for an exercise where criticism is known to be rare. If necessary, euphemism is de rigueur, since a severe rating can condemn the future of a career, especially when it is just beginning, as is the case with the Rwanda redactor, who is only twenty-nine years old.

Antoine Anfré is an intelligent and sympathetic agent. However, he has the defect, for a civil servant, of not easily bending to the constraints of the administration. He has a curious mind and the qualities of a good researcher. He also has good interpersonal skills, expresses himself well and can take good initiatives, but he will have to learn to make some concessions to others in order to integrate into administrative teams. The drop in his rating from last year is due to the reasons outlined above. If he can correct his shortcomings, he can become a good agent.

The explanation through “personal memos” and the independence of thought⁹²⁸ shown by Antoine Anfré are all the more likely because the young diplomat’s previous rating, when he was number two at the Kampala embassy under Ambassador Gérard, was very laudatory.

Mr. Antoine Anfré left Kampala last April. I therefore benefited from his collaboration and his sound knowledge of the country for about 8 months. In his first post abroad, this young and valuable agent has, under the authority of my predecessor and then under mine, exercised the important responsibilities entrusted to him (political sector, press; on several occasions chargé d'affaires) with intelligence, maturity and a sense of public service. Gifted with sound judgment and obvious analytical and writing skills, Mr. Anfré took an interest in Uganda and maintained a good network of relations and friendships there, even though conditions in that country were still very difficult when he took office. Mr. Anfré is undoubtedly destined, after a few more years of training, to have a successful career in the Department.

Such a start is in every way promising for a successful career. Paul Dijoud’s rating puts a relative brake on this. In diplomacy, one does not always recover from such an indictment. Noting that he had been sidelined within the DAM, Antoine Anfré decided to leave the service to prepare for the ENA, in order to return to the profession with a different status. Although he passed the entrance exam, his career did not have the prominence that he could have hoped for, given his intellectual qualities, as noted by Yannick Gérard in his analysis of the situation in Rwanda in 1990 and 1991. One can also note the contradiction between the negative consequences of these “personal memos” and the fact that they were duly accredited within the DAM, since they were archived in the same way as the classic “memos” issued by the Directorate or the sub-directorate. It turns out

that “personal memos” were only tolerated if they were not “personal.” The “qualities of a good researcher” mentioned in the global evaluation are not to be credited to an agent, so the negative implications are obvious, immediate and brutal.

7.3.5.2 AFTER KAMPALA

In the vexatious measures that hit the young diplomat Antoine Anfré, the opinion given on his previous functions at the embassy in Kampala may appear as an aggravating fact, if one measures the divergent character of the diplomatic analyses of the French ambassador to Uganda. Far from the ideological constructions of the “Ugandan-Tutsi” definition of the RPF, he tried to maintain a dialogue with the movement and to approach it as it was rather than to apply interpretations that were detached from reality. This approach of reason, a testimony of professionalism in diplomatic matters and of a freedom of thought necessary for the representation of France, could not but be badly received in the places of power over Rwanda, Foreign Affairs with the DAM and the Élysée with the EMP.⁹²⁹ On the other hand, for such a French diplomat, intellectual and professional coherence had to be imposed in the aftermath of Kampala, whatever the price.

On 20 April, 2004, Yannick Gérard took an early retirement by five years. It is not known whether this decision had anything to do with his experience in Uganda and his mission with Operation Turquoise.⁹³⁰ The positions he subsequently held were consistent with a classic career path. An interesting effect of Ambassador Gérard’s intellectual and even ethical influence can be seen in Antoine Anfré’s reaction to the vexatious rating he received at the DAM in 1992. The implicit rule in government administrations, for the careers of senior civil servants, is to avoid appearing uncontrollable. Responding to a vexatious rating is not advisable. The agent’s reaction to this situation even contributes to the evaluation of his or her profile and to the guarantees that the hierarchy wishes to obtain on the loyalty of officers - this is generally understood in terms of submission. Reacting too strongly, defending the quality of one’s service, can further aggravate the negative assessment. Faced with this dilemma, Antoine Anfré makes a decision and defends himself by invoking the recognition he received

in his previous assignment. Beyond evoking Yannick Gérard's assessments, the diplomat's reaction can be seen as the legacy of an attitude of freedom that honors a servant of the State:

Without questioning the overall assessment of my hierarchy, I consider it necessary to make the following comments:

1/ When one is a trainee SAAE and has no previous professional experience, accepting to be assigned to the French Embassy in Kampala as the main collaborator of the head of the post seems to me to be the mark of a certain flexibility.

2/ having served as chargé d'affaires on several occasions, to the satisfaction of my successive heads of mission and - at least to my knowledge - to that of the Department, also seems to me to be a sign of a certain ability to work in a team and to take on responsibilities, however modest.⁹³¹

7.3.5.3 THE SILENCE OF THE ARCHIVES, THE HONOR OF INDIVIDUALS

If the temporary retirement of Antoine Anfré and his departure from the Department of African and Malagasy Affairs is documented, in general the personal files of civilian and military agents remain silent on the real reasons for their departures, for giving up their careers in order to remain independent. Are there reasons that explain the departure of Colonel Galinié from Kigali in July 1991, or the departures of General Varret from the Military Cooperation Mission in April 1993, and Colonel Leport from the Rwanda unit in 1998? These questions can be answered today through testimonies, in order to continue the expression of critical thinking that was initiated, as we have seen in this chapter, from the moment of the event, by a minority of independent men knowing that this history of Rwanda is very much a history of individuals. It is now time for speech to be freely expressed.

These positions of lucidity and the will to express them concern only a very small number of civil and military agents of the State and political authorities. As we have seen in the pages of this report, this attitude is shared by some actors on the ground. They cannot escape the need to understand the reality they observe and which forms the framework of their mission. They develop a form of intelligence of the situations which leads them to critical examinations and individual initiatives. The education received, along with personal ethics, can explain the reason for individual struggles in the midst of obscurity and dangers.

This minority can be described as intellectually independent and professionally courageous. It resists the power of imposed frameworks of interpretation and refuses to abstain in the exercise of its functions. It represents only a tiny number of actors in the French history of Rwanda. It embodies, all the same, a way of thinking and of serving that it is necessary to underline today. Particularly since this minority was not recognized in the past for its true value. It could even be judged as being opposed to the interests of France, whereas it is possible to demonstrate, on the contrary, the adequation of its acts and thoughts with the promises of a free country. It is time to confront France's extremely sad and tragic Rwandan history in order to transform it into common knowledge, and learn from the lessons that concern a country and its democratic identity. These lessons point to France's will to build new ties with the world, showing humility and determination, and keeping in mind a Rwandan past filled with abandoned possibilities, immeasurable pain and moments of lucidity that remain like beacons in the night.⁹³²

The Research Commission wished to bring these reflections to the attention of the public, leading to the conclusions of its Report.

Research Commission on the French Archives related to Rwanda and the Tutsi Genocide (1990-1994)

Conclusion (p.966-977)

An interrogation, which justifies the collective scientific enterprise of the Commission and which it is necessary to recall, opened this Report. How to explain the contradiction between the hopes for democratization with the negotiated settlement of the 1990-1993 conflict in Rwanda, and the complete disaster of the genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi in 1994? When France became involved in Rwanda in October 1990, its ambition was to work towards the democratization of the country, in accordance with the guidelines drawn by President François Mitterrand at the Franco-African summit in La Baule (June 1990). France subsequently supported the conclusion of peace accords between the Rwandan government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). On August 4 1993, the Arusha Peace Accords were signed, by virtue of which UN peacekeepers took over from the French military presence. Eight months later, April 7 1994, Rwanda plunged into a genocide. Tutsi in this country were exterminated as well as moderate Hutu, leading to the disappearance of nearly a million people. This catastrophe projected the genocidal act onto the African continent.

Following a presentation of the Commission's work, the conclusions fall into two categories. On the one hand, they present the results of the research conducted in the archives concerning the role and engagement of France in Rwanda between 1990 and 1994. On the other hand, they address the question of responsibilities that are of a political, institutional and intellectual nature, as well as ethical, cognitive and moral.

The work of the Commission and its limits

The Commission's mandate was to examine the French state archives. These were made widely available and the Commission consulted all the archival collections that it was able to access, including thousands of documents covering primarily political, diplomatic and military domains. All of its findings and

statements are based on identified sources, referenced in the footnotes. The authors of the Report also went beyond the literality of the archive in order to determine what was left out and understand the conditions of production and reception.

Historians must nonetheless remain humble and indicate the limits of their work. The Commission doubtlessly missed certain documents, those that either disappeared or were never deposited in public archival centers. It was impossible to access several sets of documents which are nonetheless preserved in archival collections. Owing to time constraints, the Commission was unable to conduct the additional archival investigations that it deemed necessary, as stated in the methodological appendices. We may also hypothesize that a certain political mindset that was prevalent at the highest level of State may have hindered the production of substantive reports on the internal organization of the presidential party in Rwanda, which would have documented the preparation of the genocide.

The French state archives do not suffice in themselves to provide an exhaustive explanation of the history and role of France's engagement in Rwanda. In order to have a more thorough understanding of this five-year period, it would be necessary to examine civil society archives in France (associations, NGOs, political parties), as well as archives in Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Holy See, and African countries, including, of course, Rwanda. Archival collections in international organizations should also be taken into consideration. Additional research must certainly be conducted.

Research Findings

The work of the Commission has made it possible to establish a series of historiographical findings that are related to the diplomatic, military and political dimensions of France's role and engagement in Rwanda.

The first finding is that the civil, military and development cooperation policies that France implemented in Rwanda beginning in the 1970s, fundamentally evolved after the crisis in October 1990. From this date onwards, the RPF exerted continuous military pressure

in northern Rwanda. France consequently implemented several parallel policies that ended up contradicting each other. It appears that the French authorities were unable to break free from their logic, even during the genocidal crisis.

Initially, France's policy in Rwanda was based on the speech in La Baule and aimed at a democratization of President Habyarimana's dictatorial regime; this was the condition for development aid, accompanied by, if necessary, military protection. For the French government, democratization was defined as both the transition to a multiparty system and the establishment of equality between citizens. The latter was increasingly marginalized in the French stipulations. Furthermore, France only gradually showed interest in the opposition parties that were created in 1991 and that challenged the power of President Habyarimana. As such, France did not always provide them with necessary support at decisive moments. Moreover, it did not sufficiently question the serious problem of counter-terrorism assistance in a non-democratic regime.

An important element looms over this policy: the positioning of the President of the Republic, François Mitterand, who maintained a strong, personal and direct relationship with the Rwandan head of state. This relationship explains the extensive implication of all the services in the Elysée. In fact, even if the Rwandan authorities were regularly reminded of the imperative to democratize the country as a condition for French aid, at the same time, requests for protection and defense were continuously relayed, dealt with and given priority. France was always prompt to react during the major Rwandan crises – October 1990, January-February 1991, June 1992, February-March 1993. During these crises, the military pressure of the RPF and the fear of a collapse of the Rwandan state fueled a sense of urgency concerning the need for a French response. This urgency, which was occasionally criticized even within the French administrations, obliterated thinking about an alternative policy. This only gradually and partially emerged in April 1993 with the installation of Edouard Balladur's government.

The policy implemented in Rwanda was also part of a context of war. The so-called indirect French engagement was carried out consistently against the RPF beginning in October 1990. Even though divergent analyses were developed at different levels of the State, the President of the Republic and the Presidential Cabinet adhered to the idea that Rwanda had been militarily attacked by the RPF, but even more importantly, the latter was considered to be an instrument of Uganda, and its action part of an even larger geopolitical context. This conception gradually spread through the ministries as well as the central administrations between 1990 and 1993, even if the analysis of the precise nature of the military threat posed by the RPF varied according to the services and the advisors. In October 1990, this threat was qualified as « Ugandan-Tutsi ». This expression is frequent in the archives and reveals the French authorities' ethnicist interpretation of Rwanda. This conception persisted and fueled a way of thinking where, given the Hutu majority, the possibility of a RPF victory was always equated with an anti-democratic takeover by an ethnic minority. This representation weighed, for example, in the Arusha negotiations over power sharing within the Rwandan army. The systematic association of the RPF with Uganda, even though this perception was not shared unanimously, led to construing the RPF as a foreign party. Providing military support to Rwanda against the RPF was always equated with defense against an external aggression. Therefore, the speedy delivery of considerable quantities of ammunition and weapons to Habyarimana's regime was justified, along with the extensive involvement of the French military in training the Rwandan Armed Forces. Similarly, the issue of Tutsi refugees who had left Rwanda since 1959, fleeing the pogroms, was never fully integrated into the analysis of the situation. Lastly, a final component of France's interpretation of the Rwandan situation can be viewed through the prism of defending la Francophonie. Hovering over Rwanda was the threat of an Anglo-Saxon world, represented by the RPF and Uganda, as well as their international allies. This had the effect of inscribing the Rwandan conflict in the search for new balances at the end of the Cold War, on both the global scale and the African continent. According to this French perception, in addition to the aforementioned, Rwanda was also considered the outpost of a more general conflict. Through an indirect but directive military intervention,

it became a question of making the country, under the guise of cooperation, an experiment in effective and discreet French action.

The Commission's second finding results from what seems to be a growing French desire, since the summer of 1992 and even more so beginning in 1993, to place the resolution of the Rwandan issue within a regional framework. On this occasion, French diplomacy proved to be proactive but remained largely isolated on the global level, without strong support from the United Nations. France also lacked support from European countries that did not want to be associated with its policy, which was judged to be too favorable towards a regime whose reputation had considerably worsened. The negotiations which led to the peace accords, in Arusha in August 1993, and the sharing of power between the Rwandan government and the RPF, were closely followed by France, acting as both observer and advisor to the Rwandan government. These accords, which marked a diplomatic victory for the RPF, offered France the possibility of disengaging from Rwanda, whereas their application proved to be extremely complex, as the country slowly became engulfed in violence and its institutions fell apart.

Following the attack on April 6 1994, during which President Habyarimana was killed, France evacuated its nationals, and prioritized evacuating the relatives of President Habyarimana's wife. When the paroxysmal phase of the genocide of Tutsi began, the French analyses and subsequent reaction were still part of a logic of disengagement and resolution of issues through international action. France's wish to avoid direct intervention in Rwanda, without, however, allowing the RPF to take total and definitive power, led to a passive policy, to say the least, in April and May 1994, at the height of the genocide. Regarding the international community, France suffered the consequences of its past engagements with the Rwandan state that prevented it from appearing as an impartial actor. And yet French authorities gave clear orders, as of April 8, to suspend the authorization of exports of war material to Rwanda, which had previously been granted to industrialists. On 16 May 1994, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alain Juppé, took measure of the massacres perpetrated against the Tutsi and qualified them as a genocide.

On May 24 in Geneva, the Minister for Humanitarian Action and Human Rights, Lucette Michaud-Chevry, stated in turn that it was a genocide, before the UN Commission on Human Rights. Use of the term genocide did not, however, lead to a fundamental reconsideration of France's policy which remained obsessed by the threat of the RPF, and never abandoned the « balanced » condemnation of massacres committed by both sides.

The Commission's third finding concerns the nature of Operation Turquoise: its mission, its means and its results. Whereas UN Resolution 929, which was largely inspired by France, does not use the word genocide, the military's mandate was subject to orders that were difficult to implement: take action from a humanitarian perspective, « stop the massacres », stabilize the military situation. It is undeniable that there was, from mid-June, within the French government and on the part of François Mitterand, a voluntarist jolt in the face of the massacres and the humanitarian crisis. It also appears that Operation Turquoise intervened at a time when the French government was still expecting a return to negotiations that would allow power sharing between the RPF and any remnants of the former regime. The intellectual framework that tended to separate humanitarian questions in Rwanda from the logic of international relations continued to prevail in some circles, where the hypothesis of the complete takeover of power by the RPF was perceived as an existential threat.

If Operation Turquoise began with very strict orders for neutrality towards the belligerents, the main source of an identified threat was nonetheless perceived to be the RPF. This analysis explains the provision of heavy military equipment and why, during the early days of Operation Turquoise reconnaissance units received the order to forego a sustained presence in Rwanda and avoid approaching sectors where they thought RPF forces could be found. Thus, the human tragedy in Bisesero and the profound failure that it represents for France was not only the result of responsibilities on the ground but also largely a result of the desire to maintain a balance between parties. The French forces feared finding themselves confronted with the RPF and a violent reaction on its behalf. However, the total collapse of the RAF at the beginning of July,

and the French forces' progressive realization of the extent to which the local elite and the Rwandan interim government were involved in the genocide of the Tutsi, demanded a re-evaluation of the conditions and means for conducting the operation. Generally speaking, the decisions that were made, following orders from Paris, were part of the uncertain context in which the Turquoise force and its military leaders found themselves, in terms of the framework they were operating in and particularly in terms of their limited latitude when faced with the terrible realities on the ground.

Although the effort to protect the threatened Tutsi was real and could be counted in the thousands of people who were rescued from dangerous situations, the humanitarian action of Operation Turquoise took place in a context marked by the exodus of several hundred thousand people, severe food shortages, and the emergence of a cholera epidemic. The choice to enter through Zaire put France in a difficult position. In July 1994, the populations found in the Humanitarian Safe Zone (HSZ) in western Rwanda, several million people, were mostly Hutu and among them were not only the murderers but also the masterminds of the genocide, who the French political authorities refused to arrest. In the end, a form of paralysis ensued, as if acting in the face of a genocide was not in the realm of possibility, even though the second half of the 20th century was haunted by the moral obligation to do everything possible to ensure that genocides would never again occur.

Faced with such a tragedy, can we stop at just a historiographical observation? The Rwandan crisis ended in disaster for Rwanda and in defeat for France. Is France an accomplice to the genocide of the Tutsi? If by this we mean a willingness to join a genocidal operation, nothing in the archives that were examined demonstrates this. Nevertheless, for a long time, France was involved with a regime that encouraged racist massacres. It remained blind to the preparation of a genocide by the most radical elements of this regime. It adopted a binary view opposing on the one hand the "Hutu ally" embodied by President Habyarimana, and on the other hand the enemy described as "Ugandan-Tutsi" for the RPF. It was slow to break with Rwanda's interim government that carried out the genocide and continued to place the RPF threat at the top of its agenda.

France reacted belatedly with Operation Turquoise, which did save many lives, but not those of the vast majority of Rwandan Tutsi exterminated in the first weeks of the genocide. The research therefore establishes a set of responsibilities, both serious and overwhelming.

Overwhelming Responsibilities

These responsibilities are political insofar as the French authority demonstrated a continual blindness in their support for a racist, corrupt and violent regime, conceived originally as a model for a new French policy in Africa as introduced in the speech at La Baule. The authorities hoped that President Habyarimana could lead the country to democracy and peace. However, despite warnings issued from Kigali, Kampala or Paris, no French policy supporting the fight against Hutu extremism and the deracialization of the state had been decided. Nor was there any response to the RPF's demands for direct negotiations. The French perception continued to be dominated by an ethno-nationalist obsession. The democratic groups were asked to choose sides, leading to the disintegration of a political arena that was trying to emerge and a society in full revival. In addition, France's peace efforts were combined with the logic of over-armament and an inflation of Rwandese military personnel. Rwanda was becoming militarized as extremist party militias flourished. At the same time, the country was struggling with dramatic economic and social problems as well as facing the AIDS epidemic.

In France, the concerns of ministers, members of Parliament, senior officials, and intellectuals, were met with indifference, rejection or bad faith. This alignment with the Rwandan power was the result of the will of the President of the Republic and the Presidential Cabinet. The exercise of presidential authority reassures high diplomatic and military powers, especially in regards to Africa. The marginalization of members of government institutions with divergent positions and the disregard of critical thought also characterized France's Rwandan history, which in many ways, resembled a crisis of government action. It revealed the failure of coordinating powers and the absence of effective countervailing powers up until at least the government cohabitation. However, due to a lack of willingness and a fear of tackling such a highly controversial and divisive subject,

the lessons from the crisis were not learned as they should have been.

The findings of political responsibility introduce institutional responsibility, both civilian and military. The Commission has demonstrated the existence of irregular administrative practices, parallel chains of communication and even command, circumvention of the rules of engagement and legal procedures, acts of intimidation and attempts to dismiss officials or agents. The government administrations were left in an environment of often opaque decisions, leaving them to adapt and govern themselves.

The body of evidence documented in the present research, and at times, previously by the institutions themselves, described institutional abuses, concealed by the political authority or in the absence of political oversight. There is evidence of this, even though the preservation of written records was not always carried out, thereby reinforcing the abnormal nature of these administrative, civil and military states of affairs. These abuses are all the more worrying as they promote thought patterns or dogmatic arguments that are opposed to the necessary reflection surrounding government action.

In addition to the institutional responsibility, there was an intellectual responsibility, which together, formed a system that showed a breakdown in the thought process. Remaining vigilant against the risk of anachronism, the Commission conducted a study of the intellectual framework of France's policy toward Rwanda and of its application. The State's diplomatic and military administrations' main approach for evaluating the situation in Rwanda and the Great Lakes Region was an ethnicist interpretation. This perspective corresponded poorly to the Rwandan reality given that the country's political and social resources were resistant to the influence of ethnicization. Efforts to promote an alternative, critical or merely detached analysis of Rwanda have been unsuccessful, but nonetheless have been formulated to the point that a body of thought has emerged from the archives of state institutions. The persistence and even obstinacy to characterize the Rwandan conflict in ethnic terms, to consider the external aggression as obvious, to define a genocidal operation as a civil war, undermined definitive political action and weakened its administrative application.

This degree of intellectual responsibility raises questions about a final set of responsibilities: ethical, cognitive and moral.

Ethical responsibility is raised when factual truths are pushed aside in favor of ideological constructions, when critical thinking is ignored, when action separates itself from thought and feeds on its own logic of power, when authorities having real power of action renounce modifying the course of events. The latter resigned themselves to a predictable catastrophe in Rwanda and the isolation of France on the international scene, entrusting Operation Turquoise with the task of restoring its image.

Ethical responsibilities regarding political action call into serious question the decisions made at the highest level that misunderstood events even when all the information was available. Ethical responsibilities also refer to the professional dimension, when civil and military servants broaden the role of the service of the State and conceive duties superior to the mere technicality of the office. In the Rwandan case, too many behaviors were marked by this difficulty to maintain freedom of judgment and action within the professional framework.

Cognitive responsibility stems from the mental inability to think about genocide as it is defined and to distinguish it from mass murder. This also leads to other impediments, such as the impossibility to understand that the definition of democracy by "the majority of the people" negates itself when an ethnic category is associated with it. Cognitive responsibility also arises when a country does not realize that the ethnicist reading repeats a colonial pattern and leads it to a strategic failure. The failure of France in Rwanda, the causes of which are not all its own, can be likened in this respect to a final imperial defeat, all the more significant because it was neither expressed nor acknowledged. It is possible that the exclusion of Rwanda from the November 1994 Franco-African Summit in Biarritz and France's unreasonable demands made on a devastated country at the end of 1994 are the unconscious scarring from an inconceivable defeat.

Moral responsibility is directed towards the willingness of individuals and society to think and act according to the good of humanity. Universal values are deeply questioned when faced with a preparation or the realization of a genocide.

How to know, how to act? That is “the great dilemma!” answered a former official aware of the events. What to do as a diplomat, a military officer, a volunteer, a journalist, in the face of the first genocidal massacres as in Amaryllis, where people survived and others died?

However, this history of France in Rwanda was not only failure and defeat. It also revealed the character of certain individuals within the institutions who, through their actions, raised the level of the State. This particular history bore witness to the ethics of certain political authorities and agents of the State, military, diplomats, and administrators, who in a crisis situation, emerged showing reason, courage and the ability to act for the human cause.

Examining the past by accepting the factual truths is the only way to free oneself from trauma and its wounds. The teachings of history must not be fought. On the contrary, they allow for peace and remembrance, they give honor and dignity when the time comes for an awareness, for knowing the true reality of our world. This reality was that of a genocide, forcing the Tutsi into terror and destruction. They will never be forgotten.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission proposes three recommendations

1. THE GENOCIDE OF THE TUTSI

a. Establishment of an International Center for Research and Documentation on Genocides and Mass Atrocity Crimes (planned for by the Mission on Genocides that led to this Commission);

b. Collective Research conducted on the prevention and repression of genocides and genocidal processes (from the end of the 19th century up until today);

c. Creation of a Warning Documentation Task-force on risks of genocide and genocidal processes

2. ARCHIVES

a. Creation of a position for an Archivist of the French Republic (based on the model of the Defender of Rights);

b. Introduction of a major law on the archives;

c. Additional means for archival staff and centers

3. FRANCE

a. Reform hiring and training of high-ranking officials by requiring research experience in history and the social sciences;

b. Introduce a history and ethics of crisis management corpus in the initial and ongoing training of public officials;

c. Enshrine genocides and resistance to genocides in educational programs, reinforced by research findings, and encourage projects between establishments on transmission and commemoration (remembrance or memorial gardens in Kigali, Paris, Marseilles, Erevan)

List of Acronyms

ACA Antenne chirurgicale aérotransportable (France)
ACM Antenne chirurgicale militaire
ACP Antenne chirurgicale parachutiste
AD Attaché de défense
ADL Association rwandaise pour la défense des droits de la personne et des libertés publiques
AEMG Autorisation d'exportation des matériels de guerre
AICF Action internationale contre la faim
ALAT Aviation légère de l'armée de Terre (France)
AML Véhicule blindé
AMT Assistance militaire et technique (France)
AN Archives nationales
ARDHO Association rwandaise des droits de l'Homme
BBTG Broad-Based Transitional Government (Rwanda)
BSL Bataillon de soutien logistique (France)
CAP Centre d'Analyse et de Prévision du MAE
CAR Central African Republic
CCCE Caisse centrale de coopération économique (France)
CDR Coalition pour la défense de la République (Rwanda)
CEC Commission d'enquête citoyenne (France)
CEMA Chef d'état-major des Armées (France)
CEMAT Chef d'état-major de l'armée de Terre
CEMP Chef de l'état-major particulier du président de la République
CERM Centre d'exploitation du renseignement militaire
CIEEMG Commission interministérielle pour l'étude des exportations de matériel de guerre (France)
CND Conseil national du développement (Rwanda)
CNRS Centre national de la recherche scientifique (France)
COMFOR Commandant des forces (France)
COIA Commandement pour les opérations inter-opérationnelles
COPID Centre opérationnel de la presse internationale de défense
COS Commandement des opérations spéciales (France)
CPM Commission politico-militaire (Rwanda)
CRAP Commando de recherche et d'action dans la profondeur
CSP Conseil supérieur du pays (Rwanda)
DAM Direction des affaires africaines et malgaches
DAMI Détachement d'assistance militaire et d'instruction (France)
DAO Détachement d'assistance opérationnelle
DAT Détachement autonome de transmission
DILA Direction de l'information légale et administrative
DGSE Direction générale des services extérieurs (France)
DPMAT Direction des ressources humaines de l'armée de Terre
DPO Department of Peacekeeping Operations (United Nations)
DRC Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire)
DRM Direction du renseignement militaire
ECPA Etablissement cinématographique et photographique des armées (1969-2001)
ECPAD Etablissement de communication et de production audiovisuelle de la Défense (depuis 2001)
EEC European Economic Community
EFAO Eléments français d'assistance opérationnelle
EMA Etat-major des Armées (France)

EMMIR Elément médical militaire d'intervention rapide
EMP Etat-major particulier de la présidence de la République
EMT Etat-major tactique
EVASAN Evacuation sanitaire
FAO Food and agriculture organization
FAR Forces armées rwandaises
FAZ Forces armées zaïroises
FIDH Fédération internationale des droits de l'Homme
FIN Force internationale neutre
GIGN Groupe d'intervention de la Gendarmerie nationale (France)
GSIGN Groupe spécialisé d'intervention de la Gendarmerie nationale
GOMN Groupe d'observateurs militaires neutres de l'OUA
HCR Haut-commissariat des Nations unies pour les réfugiés
HRW Human Rights Watch
ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross (Geneva)
ICTR International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (Arusha)
IDC Internationale démocrate-chrétienne
IGR Interim Government of Rwanda
IMF International Monetary Fund
JMO Journaux des marches et des opérations
JO Journal officiel (France)
KIBAT Name of UNAMIR Belgian bataillon
LDC Least Developed Countries
MAM Mission d'assistance militaire (France)
MDM Médecins du Monde
MDR Mouvement démocratique républicain (Rwanda)
MIP Mission d'information parlementaire de 1998 (named Mission Quilès)
MMC Mission militaire de coopération (Rwanda)
MOF Mission d'observateurs français
MRND Mouvement révolutionnaire national pour le développement (Rwanda)
MSF Médecins sans Frontières
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
NRA National Resistance Army (Uganda)
NUOI Direction des Nations unies et des organisations internationales (MAE)
OAU Organization of African Unity
OBSARM Observatoire des transferts d'armements (France)
ORINFOR Office rwandais d'information
PAM Programme d'aide alimentaire
PARMEHUTU Parti du mouvement de l'émancipation des Bahutu (Rwanda)
PCIAT Poste de commandement interarmées de théâtre (France)
PDC Parti démocrate-chrétien (Rwanda)
PDI Parti démocratique islamiste (Rwanda)
PG Presidential Guard (Rwanda)
PL Parti libéral (Rwanda)
PSD Parti social-démocrate (Rwanda)
RADER Rassemblement démocratique rwandais
RANU Rwandese Alliance for National Unity
RAPAS Recherche aéroportée et Actions spéciales
RDP Régiment de dragons parachutistes (France)
REI Régiment étranger d'infanterie (France)
REP Régiment étranger de parachutistes
RFI Radio France internationale
RIMa Régiment d'infanterie de marine
ROEM Renseignement d'origine électromagnétique
RPA Rwandan Patriotic Army
*RPF Rwandan Patriotic Front

RPIMa Régiment parachutiste d'infanterie de Marine (France)
RSF Reporters sans Frontières
RSSG Représentant spécial du secrétaire général des Nations unies
RTL M Radio-Télévision libre des Mille Collines
SGDN Secrétariat général de la Défense nationale (France)
SHD Service historique de la Défense
SHZ Safe Humanitarian Zone (does this need quotes since it wasn't really a safe zone ?)
SIRPA Service d'informations et de relations publiques des armées
SML Section de mortiers lourds (France)
TD Télégramme diplomatique
UAM Union africaine et malgache
UN United Nations
UNAMIR United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda
UNAR Union nationale rwandaise
UNHCR Haut-commissariat des Nations unies pour les Réfugiés
*UNICEF United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNOMUR United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda
WEU Western European Union

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