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Mobilizing the Mob in Rwanda: The Un-Trivial Contest

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As Hannah Arendt notes, the Nazis concealed their slaughter beneath a bewildering array of front organizations, shadow governments and legal obfuscation. Perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide, on the other hand, concealed little. The juridical status of the Tutsi was never altered: mass deportations never occurred. An Arendtian examination of the Rwandan genocide throws the mob-elite alliance into sharp relief and, in so doing, lends support to certain elements of Arendt's theory while casting doubt on others. Arendt distinguishes, for example, between the political and intellectual elite: a distinction borne out by the Rwandan case. She also asserts that the intellectual elite had no influence whatsoever on the regime; a contention called into question. In Rwanda, however, the creative use of a trivia contest allowed the elite to mobilize the mob and prepare the masses for violence by (1) reacquainting its audience with anti-Tutsi propaganda and (2) publicly identifying targets in the month before Habyarimana's plane was shot down.

Introduction

In her effort to understand the German genocide, Hannah Arendt does not speak about genocide as such but rather discusses the emergence of a novel form of government – totalitarianism, which she defines as a system in which “genocide was the *raison d’être*” (Kateb 1984, 80). She describes a system that required by its very logic and for its perpetuation, “an unending supply of innocent victims” (Villa 1999, 18). The Nazi regime manufactured these victims by first destroying the juridical person, then the moral person, and finally “human individuality itself” (Villa 1999, 27). Dehumanization proceeded in an orderly and systematic fashion from the elimination of political rights, to ghettoization and finally concentration camps. Yet in Rwanda there were no camps, no ghettos and the legal status of the Tutsi never changed. Even in the absence of a camp system however, dehumanization occurred and terror thrived.¹ In what follows, I argue that in the absence of some of the formal developments Arendt deems important in the German case, the mob-elite alliance was all the more crucial in creating an effective campaign of extermination in Rwanda. A select group of political and intellectual elite mobilized an eager mob by utilizing a media campaign to prepare both the victims and the masses for violence. In what

¹ Harzfeld (2010) describes the dehumanization of running for one's life; whereas, Carl Wilkens (2011) argues that a version of a concentration camp did exist. Rwandans were invited to take refuge in schools, churches and then abandoned by their protectors.

follows I, first, explore Arendt's theory of the mob/elite alliance, in which she develops the distinction between the mob and the masses, as well as, a distinction between the political and intellectual elite. Second, I examine the mob-elite alliance in Rwanda, in which the elite utilized, among other things, an innovative trivia contest.

Among the elements that, according to Arendt, *crystallize* in a genocidal regime is the curious alliance between the mob and the elite. This relationship became all the more pivotal in Rwanda owing to the absence of a formal, legalistic system of dehumanization. Moreover, the mob-elite alliance becomes all the more conceptually perplexing once we realize that Arendt not only distinguishes between the mob and the masses, she also has two separate and distinct elite in mind: political and intellectual. In the case of Nazi Germany, the political elite may have supported and utilized the intellectual elite but the two groups did not synchronize their activities and their roles remained separate. The Nazi regime removed both Jews and political opponents from academia, and installed supporters in key academic posts. The intellectual elite advocated allegiance to the National Socialist Party and used scholarship to justify its policies.² Despite these mutually supportive roles, the intellectual elite remained somewhat removed from the regime itself and were likely unaware of the atrocities. In Rwanda, on the other hand, the intellectual and political elite enjoyed a highly integrated relationship. Both the political and intellectual elite played multiple roles; they also explicitly and purposefully coordinated their efforts. As we shall soon see, the intellectual elite, Ferdinand Nahimana and Leon Mugesera, not only supported the regime in the abstract; they held formal positions within the regime and used their credibility as intellectuals to defend the regime abroad and to craft strategy at home.

Arendt's Mob/Elite Alliance

In describing the relationship between the elite and the mob, Arendt uses the phrase -- *temporary alliance*. The *temporary* nature of the alliance refers to the role of the intellectual elite and the mob; neither the political elite nor the masses figure into this description. Arendt notes that the mob served as agitators of violence during the Dreyfus Affair. In so doing they proved to be amenable both to manipulation and to coordination by the

² Max Weinreich (1999) offers the most thorough description of the relationship between the Nazi regime and the intellectual elite. Yvonne Sherratt (2013) examines the impact of the Nazi regime on a select group of philosophers, both supporters and opponents.

political elite. It was the mob that escalated the Dreyfus controversy from an unfortunate political scandal to a series of violent episodes, by publicly calling for Jewish blood. For Arendt the mob is a necessary by-product of capitalism. It contains shades of a criminal underworld and is characterized by rootlessness and contempt for respectable society (Benhabib 1996, 78-79). The mob are the

denizens of the frankly criminal milieu that thrived in the bowels of nineteenth- and early twentieth century capitalism, a motley assortment of "armed bohemians" who share the respectable bourgeoisie's possessive individualism without the latter's inhibited propriety, and who bypass the much-vaunted ethic of work in favor of more or less organized violence (Tsao 2002, 584).

Often mistaken for the people, by those who hope to organize it as well as by its victims, Arendt states clearly that this is an incorrect supposition; instead the mob is an angry, violent "caricature of the people". It "hates the society from which it is excluded" (Arendt 1958, 107). This antagonism toward respectable society is a predisposition shared by both the mob and the elite.

Arendt emphasizes that there is a striking resemblance between the characteristics of the mob and the elite. The "present totalitarian rulers and the leaders of totalitarian movements still bear the characteristic traits of the mob" (Arendt 1958, 326). The elite are "completely absorbed by their desire to see the ruin of this whole world of fake security, fake culture, and fake life" (Arendt 1958, 328). Their frustration was genuine; their pursuit of change, desperate. They had been "touched by misery...[and were] deadly hurt by hypocrisy..." (Arendt 1958, 331). They sought solace in the feeling of belonging afforded by the totalitarian movement. The elite embraced totalitarianism in order to put an end to hypocrisy, while the mob wanted "access to history even at the price of destruction" (Arendt 1958, 332). Thus, the only real common ground between the mob and the elite could be found in the depth of their dissatisfaction with the status quo, their sense of despair at their exclusion from respectable society and their profound desire to belong to something. While this shared animosity does not provide an enduring basis for a long term alliance, the temporary cooperation galvanizes the mob. The intellectual elite offers both domestic and international audiences a palatable explanation for the regime's policies; the political elite arranges and triggers episodic violence. Finally, the routinized 'work' of extermination is turned over to the masses (Shklar 1983, 71). As we

shall soon see, in Rwanda the question of whether the masses took up this 'work' varied regionally.

The role of the intellectual elite may be among Arendt's most controversial assertions, particularly in light of later claims that she "copped a plea on behalf of her embattled mentor", Martin Heidegger (Wolin 1995, 34). She not only draws attention to the intellectual elite's exclusion from and disdain for respectable society but she also distinguishes between two different sets of motives. She identifies one group who *merely cooperated* with the regime and another who volunteered its services out of a *genuine commitment* to National Socialism. Arendt's discussion of the elite is notable in that she both draws attention to the role played by intellectuals and then minimizes that role to the point of exoneration. Though she acknowledges that the intellectual elite may have played a role in legitimizing the totalitarian movement for external audiences, she also argues it had no impact on the totalitarian regime.³

[I]t must be stated that what these desperate men of the twentieth century did or did not do had no influence on totalitarianism whatsoever, although it did play some part in earlier, successful attempts of the movements to force the outside world to take their doctrines seriously (Arendt 1958, 339).

Though it is unclear to what earlier efforts Arendt is referring, she notes that these intellectual supporters were "shaken off even before the regimes proceeded toward their greatest crimes" (Arendt 1958, 339). Given that the intellectual elite, as well as the mob, retain an element of unpredictability, the very characteristic that predisposes them to initiate violence may render their long term reliability doubtful, since spontaneity makes individuals "unpredictable and therefore get[s] in the way of attempts to harness [them] for collective motion" (Canovan 2000, 27). In short, while the political elite coordinates outbreaks of violence, the intellectual elite provides a theoretical justification which serves, temporarily, to deflect criticism and, possibly, deter intervention.

If the mob hated the "society from which it [was] excluded," the mass demonstrated no such potent animosity, no contempt (Arendt 1958, 107). Rather the masses "[yearn] for anonymity, for being just a number and functioning only as a cog..." (Arendt 1958, 329). The main trait of the "mass

³ Judith Shklar (1983, 67) argues that Arendt's description of the intellectual elite is tailored to Heidegger.

man is not brutality and backwardness, but isolation and a lack of normal social relationships" (Arendt 1958, 317). Rendered atomized and isolated by the virtually simultaneous "breakdowns of civic, political, [and] cultural associations," the mass man has lost "a stable space of reference, identity...a particular social perspective from which to view the world" (Benhabib 1996, 55, 66-67). If the mob man's outlook is characterized by anger and resentment, the mass man's condition is one of isolation and loneliness. The role of the masses can probably best be described as a supporting one, though this characterization runs the risk of (1) understating their importance, and (2) overlooking the role of the elite in preparing the masses since their willingness to take up the work of killing constitutes a necessary condition for the execution of a genocide. The masses can fulfill various supporting roles though they lack the criminal element necessary to initiate violence; additionally, they lack the perspective necessary for judgment that might enable them to resist the onslaught of propaganda. The troubling thing for Arendt is that the mass man proves imminently more amenable to manipulation, though the lack of animosity means that this manipulation will require both a catalyst and a justification; whereas the mob man will undertake violence with only the slightest of provocations. Ultimately, however, it is the mass man who is capable of the greatest crimes, "provided that these crimes were well organized and assumed the appearance of routine jobs" (Arendt 1958, 337). The point is that just as there are two different groups of elite serving different functions, genocidal violence is perpetrated by two distinct groups. The mob, whose hatred requires little in the way of provocation, initiates the violence; the masses, whose existential despair predisposes them to manipulation, take up the work with a peculiar devotion. In short, while Arendt warns of explosive potential created by the temporary alliance between the elite and the mob, it is the mass man, utterly lacking in spontaneity, who proves to be more reliable over the long term, as long as he is carefully prepared and motivated, hence manipulated, by an effective elite. In the Rwandan case, the political and intellectual elite proved to be deeply interconnected and they perpetrated an extremely efficient genocide without either modern weapons or sophisticated bureaucratic organizations.

Race and Ethnicity in the Prelude to Genocide

Most explanations of the Rwandan genocide discuss the role of ideology. Verwimp (2000) argues that the Habyarimana regime employs a Marxist interpretation of the Hamitic myth, casting Tutsi as an intellectual bourgeois who refused to do the difficult work of tilling the soil. Mamdani (2001) views

the Kayibanda regime as primarily responsible for imbuing the Hamitic myth with racist overtones and casting the Tutsi as malicious and manipulative invaders, depriving the Hutu of the rewards of their work. The role of the Hamitic *hypothesis* in the Rwandan genocide has been well documented (Mamdani 2001). It derives from sociological and political questions regarding the construction of Hutu and Tutsi identity, as well as an anthropological investigation of the Tutsi migration hypothesis. The term Hamitic *hypothesis* is used in the literature to refer both to the anthropological hypothesis regarding Tutsi migration and the value laden myths that were used in the construction of Tutsi and Hutu as political identities. The Tutsi migration hypothesis is, in fact, an anthropological hypothesis, linked to questions of whether Tutsi exists as a genetic group. The myth of Hamitic peoples in Africa appropriates the label -- hypothesis -- inappropriately, lending an air of scientific validity to a socially constructed myth.

The Tutsi migration hypothesis finds support across a variety of academic disciplines. Simply put the idea is that the Tutsi of East Africa, primarily Rwanda and Burundi, migrated to the Great Lakes region around the 15th century from southern Ethiopia and southern Somalia. This migration ostensibly occurred because the Tutsi sought a climate more suitable to cattle. This hypothesis finds support, though certainly not unequivocal support, in genetic studies, fossil records and historical accounts (Mamdani 2001, 43-62). The Tutsi migration hypothesis shifts in the direction of a socially constructed, value laden myth when it begins to suggest that the physical features common to the Tutsi are genetically closer to Caucasian. Moreover, the supposition of genetic similarity is further co-opted by the suggestion that the physical features are co-terminus with higher levels of intelligence and a greater propensity toward civilization. These so-called scientific findings were utilized by colonial powers in the construction of a Tutsi race, invested with social and political privilege, not unlike that of the Court Jews of which Arendt writes. Thus a legitimate academic hypothesis was transformed into a myth or pseudo-hypothesis and gradually began to morph into an Arendtian ideology, in so far as it purported to explain not only the history of Rwanda, East Africa and power relations with the European powers but also "...claimed to explain all signs of civilization in Bantu Africa" (Mamdani 2001, 85).

If the question of genetic origin of Hutu/Tutsi is the subject of scholarly debate, the emergence of a hierarchical relationship between the two groups is no less controversial. Mamdani argues that while polarization may have

developed between 1756 and 1765, systematic exploitation of the Hutu did not come to characterize the relationship until King Rwabugiri (1860-1895) imposed mandatory labor requirements specifically on the Hutu (2001, 66; Newbury 1980, 100; Newbury 1989, 112).⁴ Despite disparate interpretations of the origins and basis for Hutu/Tutsi identities, some consensus does exist on a few points. Prior to colonization the kingdom of Rwanda-Burundi was governed by kings, usually Tutsi. They governed in conjunction with Hutu spiritual guidance. Thus, Hutu were not excluded from governance (Mamdani 2001, 64). Europeans, impressed by the political organization they found in Rwanda-Burundi, utilized the existing social structure to govern *in absentia*. In keeping with prevailing ideas about race, European colonizers constructed Tutsi identity as something it had not previously been, closer to Caucasian and more civilized. In short, Tutsi became an intermediary rung on the hierarchy of political power, one step below European and above Hutu. Belgian colonialists “scientifically” measured the differences between Hutu and Tutsi and issued ethnically based identity cards in the 1930s. Mamdani argues that under colonialism the Tutsi became a racial group, which is to say they came to be regarded as an “alien invader” and associated with, though not synonymous with, colonial power (2001, 99-104). In the aftermath of World War II, fueled by both internal and external pressures, Belgian colonialists began to support democracy, which meant rule by the Hutu majority. As Rwanda proceeded toward independence, the Hutu revolution came to symbolize both independence from Belgium and governance by the Hutu majority.

Independence from Belgium was a political goal on which both the Tutsi and the Hutu agreed; the social, political and economic institutions that would follow independence, however, generated no such consensus (Mamdani 2001, 117).⁵ Moreover, Tutsi leaders expected independence to usher in a return to traditional Tutsi leadership; whereas Hutu leaders sought to escape both Tutsi and Belgian dominance.⁶ The Revolution of 1959 began in July when Umwami Mutara Rudahigwa died suddenly and was replaced by his inept, half-brother, Kigeri Ndahindurwa (Mamdani 2001, 123; Des Forges 1999, 38). The political party, PARMEHUTU, was created in response and the resulting violence led colonial administrators to replace

⁴ By the end of 1963, 40,000 Rwandan refugees had registered with the Ugandan government, perhaps another 10,000 remained unregistered (Otunnu 1999a, 8).

⁵ For contrasting interpretations of the 1959 Revolution, see Newbury (1989) and Lemarchand (1970).

⁶ Lemarchand (1970) suggests that disparate views of the revolution had a regional component as well.

more than 300 local Tutsi chiefs and sub chiefs with Hutu. Moreover, a Hutu military was created and the first wave of Tutsi exodus commenced.⁷ The revolution was completed in 1962 when the monarchy was ousted and an overwhelming Hutu majority government installed as the result of the UN-supported referendum (Mamdani 2001, 125). In short, the role of ethnicity in Rwandan history is sometimes overstated in so far as not all Tutsi were well off, just as not all Hutu were poor. Not all Tutsi were politically powerful, though prior to independence, virtually all chiefs and sub chiefs were Tutsi and in that sense, all Hutu were to some degree subordinate. For that reason, “an appeal to Hutu solidarity became, for Hutu leaders, the most effective rallying point for revolutionary activity” (Newbury 1989, 213).

The First and Second Republics represent different attempts to address the remnants of colonialism. Grégoire Kayibanda (1963-73) sought principally to empower the previously disempowered Hutu majority. During his administration, PARMEHUTU became the dominant political party with more than 70% electoral support. Tutsi inside Rwanda were relegated to non-political roles and Tutsi outside Rwanda organized as a rebel force.⁸ This rebel force launched periodic attacks on Hutus in Rwanda, which were often followed by reprisals after which the attacking Hutu redistributed the property of the Tutsi they had killed. Thus, ethnic massacres and redistribution of property went hand-in-hand (Mamdani 2001, 129-130). Kayibanda was ousted by Juvénal Habyarimana in July of 1973. Habyarimana pledged to reconcile Hutu and Tutsi; he sought to overcome ethnic identities by utilizing a quota system and establishing the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND) as the sole political party. Habyarimana’s regime consolidated power and enjoyed some indications of success throughout the 1970s and 1980s. While his regime made some efforts toward reconciliation with Tutsi living in Rwanda, it also took a hardline against repatriation of Tutsi exiles, declaring that Rwanda was ‘full up’. Meanwhile Tutsi refugees experienced varying levels of discrimination while living abroad. In Burundi, exiles with connections could often get the appropriate papers to access both education and employment opportunities. In Zaire and Uganda, they enjoyed few political rights, limited access to employment opportunities and were labeled as foreigners.

⁷ According to Des Forges (1999, 40) the Tutsi population in Rwanda declined from 17.5% of the population in 1952 to 8.4% in 1991.

⁸ By the end of 1963, 40,000 Rwandan refugees had registered with the Ugandan government, perhaps another 10,000 remained unregistered (Otunnu 1999a, 8).

It was the marginalized status and intermittent discrimination experienced by the exiles that motivated them to join resistance movements, including the National Resistance Army (NRA) in Uganda, which would ultimately prepare them to form the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). Rwandan refugees played an important role in the 1985 coup that eventually brought Yoweri Museveni to power in Uganda and in stabilizing the regime during the late 1980s. As the situation in Uganda began to deteriorate, many exiles joined the NRA, where they gained training, experience and access to fairly sophisticated weapons (Reed 2013, 483-485; Otunnu 1999b). With Museveni preparing to reduce the military that had served him well and anti-refugee sentiment on the rise in Uganda, on October 1st of 1990, Fred Rwigyema and approximately 10,000 Rwandan refugees absconded from the Ugandan military with rifles, machine guns, jeeps, trucks, rocket launchers and a few cannons (Kinzer 2008, 65; Otunnu 1999b, 42).⁹ Over the next three years, the RPF waged war on an embattled and crumbling regime. Unfortunately this armed invasion provided the Habyarimana regime with the impetus and Hutu radicals perhaps with the justification to re-ignite ethnic conflict and wage an increasingly virulent propaganda war against the Tutsi.

Rwanda's Political and Intellectual Elite

Alison Des Forges (1999) views Théoneste Bagosora as the mastermind and prime villain behind the Rwanda genocide. While the legal advantages of assigning primary responsibility are clear, Des Forges' characterization runs the risk of obfuscating the highly collaborative nature of the undertaking. Although the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) used the term mastermind in describing Bagosora's role, it also shifted the focus to a conspiratorial effort, to a cast of characters of whom Bagosora was perhaps the linchpin. In Arendtian terms, Bagosora and Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza served as the political elite, while Leon Mugesera and Ferdinand Nahimana comprise the intellectual elite. If the political elite are those who recognize and exploit the mob's tendency toward violence, Bagosora and Barayagwiza serve as Rwanda's prime examples. In the later stages of the Habyarimana regime, Bagosora seems to have played a rather unique role. He was part of the regime, may not have enjoyed the trust and confidence of Habyarimana, himself, yet at some point he clearly gained the

⁹ Rwigyema was killed on October 2nd and Paul Kagame took his place as head of the RPF. For competing accounts of Rwigyema's death, see Prunier 1997 and 2009. Furthermore, Otunnu (1999b) explores the power struggle within the RPF that likely led to the deaths of Rwigyema and others.

confidence of the *akazu*, Habyarimana's radical inner circle. In the months leading up to Habyarimana's death, most accounts have Bagosora serving as a founder and major supporter of Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) and participating in planning sessions. During the genocide, he commanded the Presidential Guard, provided instructions to the *Interahamwe* (youth association of the MRND), and presided over planning sessions (Des Forges 1999, 54). Bagosora's role as head of the military, the Presidential Guard and the *Interahamwe*, in addition to his influential position at RTLM, put him in a position to train and coordinate the mob, as well as, influence the masses (Des Forges 1999, 104-108). The impact of the Coalition for the Defense of the Republic (CDR), however, also bears noting.

From 1973 to 1991 the National Republican Movement for Development and Democracy (MRND) was the only political party in Rwanda; every man, woman and child belonged to it, as required by law. In response to both internal and external pressure to democratize, Habyarimana appointed the National Commission on Reform in July of 1990. The Commission proposed a multi-party system, which was approved as a constitutional amendment in June of 1991 and a coalition government took office in April of 1992. Between June 1991 and April 1992 more than fifteen political parties emerged to challenge the MRND. On the left, the Liberal Party (PL) and Social Democratic Party (PSD) advocated increased democratization and decried human rights violations. On the right, the Coalition for the Defense of the Republic (CDR) took up militant, anti-Tutsi rhetoric and criticized Habyarimana for any cooperation with the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). Moreover, the Democratic Republican Movement (MDR), which controlled the seat of the Prime Minister in the coalition government, increasingly posed a serious threat to Habyarimana's ability to deliver the expected rewards to supporters. Under the Habyarimana regime 90% of the opportunities in higher education were allocated to Hutu, with Tutsi and Twa sharing the remaining 10%. When MDR's Agathe Uwilingiyimana took the office of Minister of Primary and Secondary Education in 1992, she introduced merit based access to higher education, thereby destroying the MRND's monopoly over access to higher education (Des Forges 1999, 54). Moreover, the Arusha Accords eliminated Hutu control of the military. Between 1962 and 1992, there was only a single Tutsi commander in the Rwandan army, whereas the Arusha Accords allocated 50% of army command posts to the RPF. Additionally, the Prime Minister under the coalition government was considerably more powerful than the President, whose position became essentially a ceremonial post (Jones 1999, 143; Kakwenzire and Kamukama 1999, 73). In short, the internal loss to MRND's

authority between April of 1992 and 1993 was considerable. Having lost its status as the sole political party, near exclusive control over political and military posts, as well as, educational opportunities, the MRND also lost substantial territory to the RPF in February of 1993, as the RPF doubled the size of the territory under its control in a mere two weeks.

The *Interahamwe* was created in this context and trained to disrupt the activities (rallies, meetings, etc.) of the other political parties.¹⁰ The other parties followed suit by creating their own youth associations. The CDR, for example, created the *Impuzamugambi*. Meanwhile, the approaching RPF presented Habyarimana with the opportunity to use fear to consolidate Hutu support for his regime by drawing attention to a common enemy. In this context, a potent alliance developed between Bagosora and Ferdinand Nahimana, a historian and speechwriter for Habyarimana. As early as December of 1991, a military commission report advocated consolidating Hutu support by casting “Tutsi inside or outside the country” as the enemy (Straus 2006, 25). Moreover, a violent struggle ensued among contending political parties.

In focusing attention on Bagosora, Des Forges also understates the role played by Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza. Barayagwiza served as head of the CDR, co-founded RTLM and served on its Steering Committee. In 1993, the CDR called on Rwandan Hutu “to rise up and unseat the President and Prime Minister for their betrayal of the country by acceptance of the Arusha Accords.” Additionally, in a CDR communication dated November of 1993, Barayagwiza encouraged Hutu to “neutralize by all means possible its enemies and their accomplices.” The CDR never enjoyed the level of popular support of either the MDR or the MNRD. Its inflammatory rhetoric, however, legitimized resistance to the Arusha Accords, as well as pre-emptive violence against unarmed civilians. Moreover, Barayagwiza exercised hands-on leadership. In 1994, he directed the *Impuzamugambi*, the youth militia associated with the CDR, and drove a truckload of weapons to Gisenyi on the 13th of April. He not only ordered but manned roadblocks set up by the *Impuzamugambi* at which Tutsi were killed. He instructed the *Impuzamugambi* not to let anyone through without either a CDR or MRND membership card (Prosecutor v. Ferdinand Nahimana, Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza and Hassan Ngeze ICTR 99-52-T).

¹⁰ No consensus exists as to when or why the military training of the *Interahamwe* began. Linda Melvern cites multiple witnesses who attest to military training in 1992 and one witness who claims that the training began as early as January of 1991 (2006, 25).

Arendt describes the alliance between the mob and the elite as temporary and it is not clear how or why the alliance is temporary. Rwanda may prove a peculiar case on this point since the entire genocide lasted only 90 days, yet it is worth noting that the academics who became rhetorical supporters or propagandists for the Bagosora regime performed their functions relatively early in the campaign. Of the two academics most commonly associated with the regime (Ferdinand Nahimana and Léon Mugesera), Mugesera had already fled the country by September of 1993 and Nahimana's primary contribution had been fulfilled by April 12, 1994, lending support to Arendt's contention that the role of the intellectual elite may be relatively short lived.

Léon Mugesera, a Canadian trained linguist, authored two pamphlets during his tenure at the Ministry for the Family and the Promotion of Women. In the first, he encouraged the imprisonment of thousands of Tutsi suspected of collaboration with the RPF. In the second pamphlet, Mugesera claimed that Tutsi were planning to restore dictatorship by exterminating the Hutu. He went as far as to suggest that the Tutsi would send the Hutu to Ethiopia via the Nyabarongo River, though it was a speech he gave to the *Interahamwe* in November of 1992 that earned Mugesera the lion's share of his notoriety. The Habyarimana regime and the RPF signed a cease fire in July of 1992 and the first of the Arusha Accords the following month. Meanwhile extremists stockpiled weapons and their public rhetoric became increasingly dismissive of the Accords and virulently anti-Tutsi. At a meeting of the *Interahamwe* in Ruhengeri, Mugesera initially urged the assembled not to allow themselves to be invaded. His rhetoric shifted, however, from a defensive mode to an offensive mode as he offered his own version of the biblical exhortation to turn the other cheek. "If you are struck once on the cheek," he encouraged the mob, "you should strike back twice." Mugesera concluded with two particularly threatening lines, both of which targeted the Tutsi for violence. In a direct reversal of the message he delivered in his second pamphlet, he warned the Tutsi "your home is in Ethiopia...we are going to send you back there quickly, by the Nyabarongo River." In an even more graphic threat, Mugesera said to the Hutu extremists assembled, "the person whose throat you do not cut will be the one who cuts yours" (Des Forges 1999, 83-85). Mugesera's message shifted from an admonishment not to allow themselves to be victimized to a call to widespread, ethnically-based, pre-emptive murder.

Ferdinand Nahimana, a French trained historian, served as advisor and speechwriter to the Habyarimana regime. Nahimana served as Dean of the

College of Letters at the National University before he became a speechwriter for the Habyarimana regime. In his early work, *Le Blanc Est Arrivé, Le Roi Est Parti* (*The White Has Arrived, The King Has Departed*), Nahimana challenges the Tutsi-centric historical narrative, by attempting among other things, to re-introduce Hutu leaders into Rwandan history. His later work, *Rwanda: Les Virages Râtes* (*Rwanda: Missed Opportunities*), has been less well received and its academic merit called into question. Nahimana certainly had an impact on the regime though the full extent of his influence is likely still unknown. He was responsible for educating military personnel on the extent of the Tutsi threat, though the degree to which he may also have educated the Habyarimana regime remains a question (Melvern 2006, 41). Additionally, when an international commission warned of human rights violations under Habyarimana, Nahimana was sent to Brussels to speak on behalf of the regime (Melvern 2006, 62). Nahimana was not only among the founders of RTLM; he proposed its creation, hired the staff and, along with Barayagwiza, controlled the finances (Melvern 2006, 54). Moreover as Director of ORINFO (Rwandan Bureau of Information) and member of the RTLM Steering Committee, he was in a position to make editorial and programming decisions, virtually unilaterally. In March 1992, Nahimana ordered a broadcast stating that a Tutsi plan to kill Hutu leaders had been revealed in Nairobi. RTLM's editorial team decided against the broadcast because it was unable to confirm the information. Nahimana overruled the editorial staff and the broadcast aired four or five times between March 3rd and 4th 1992. In the aftermath of these broadcasts, over three hundred Tutsi were killed in Bugesera alone (Melvern 2006, 26-27; Des Forges 1999, 68). Finally on March 28th of 1994, Nahimana sent a letter to members of the political and intellectual elite urging that "young people, especially those displaced by the RPF advance, be trained as part of the 'civil defense' operation" (Des Forges 1999, 110). Additionally, he encouraged the elite not to "remain 'unconcerned' but rather work ... to rouse the population to the danger of war" (Des Forges 1999, 170). In isolation these individuals could likely have instilled fear; none of them however, could have created terror in the absence of a highly effective alliance.

Overview of the Genocide

By early April of 1994 both the RPF and the *Interahamwe* were well armed, well trained and had substantial troops in Kigali. At approximately 8:20 in the evening of April 6th, 1994, President Juvénal Habyarimana's plane was shot down on its approach to Kigali International Airport by two ground-to-air missiles. Though the circumstances surrounding

Habyarimana's assassination remain somewhat ambiguous, the events that followed are, at least in broad strokes, somewhat more clear.¹¹ Théoneste Bagosora took control of the government and pressed for a military takeover. He was rebuffed by UNAMIR Commander, General Roméo Dallaire and later went about the business of installing an interim government and eliminating political opposition. By roughly 2 p.m. the next day, Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana had been killed, as well as Félicien Ngango (Head of the Social Democratic Party -- PSD), Landoald Ndasingwa (Head of the Liberal Party -- PL), Joseph Kavaruganda (President of the Constitutional Court) and ten Belgian Peacekeepers. In other words within 24 hours of the plane crash, the Presidential Guard had eliminated all political rivals (Des Forges 1999, 185-201).¹²

Despite the creation of an interim government on the 8th of April, the Presidential Guard, under Bagosora, was in control. The interim government was sworn in on April 9th and fled Kigali three days later. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to determine when the genocide began, which is to say when the Bagosora regime decided to systematically target the Tutsi. It did, however, happen quickly. There is evidence of systematic violence against the Tutsi as early as April 7th and on April 12th, a broadcast aired on state radio, calling on Rwandans to attack Tutsi civilians (Straus 2006, 50; Des Forges 1999, 202-203).¹³ The first wave of killing targeted political opponents, including moderate Hutu, like Uwilingiyimana. By April 12th, the Tutsi had clearly, and publicly, become the targets. Scott Straus (2006) notes that the onset of violence varies regionally, though there is little variation in the pattern of violence. Once the killing began in a particular region, it intensified quickly. In Kibuye prefecture for example, violence did not begin until April 10th but 77% of the victims were already dead by the 19th of April (Straus 2006, 57). Again, though the onset date of violence varies, the vast majority of the victims were killed within two weeks. The violence leveled off in May and June until the RPF took control of Kigali, ending the genocide, on July 4th 1994.

¹¹ For a concise description of the competing theories around Habyarimana's assassination and their weaknesses, see Straus (2006, 44-45). For a recent report on their examination of the crash site, wreckage and eyewitness testimony, see Warden and McClue (2009).

¹² Des Forges (1999, 194) estimates that the Presidential Guard numbered between 1300 and 1500.

¹³ Linda Melvern reports that when the military commander of Gisenyi assembled troops to tell them of Habyarimana's death on the evening of the 6th, he also informed them "that 'work' had to be done to 'finish off the *inyenzi*'" (Tutsi) (2006, 165-166).

The Trivia Contest That Wasn't

The virulent anti-Tutsi rhetoric of RTLM and *Kangura* (a MRND sponsored magazine) has been the subject of considerable analysis and commentary. The role played by *Kangura* has often compared to that of *Der Stürmer* during the German genocide (Kagwi-Ndungu 2007). Moreover, the refusal of the international community to neutralize RTLM has been addressed by Des Forges (2007) and Dallaire (2007), among others. Des Forges (2007) and Darryl Li (2007) examine the marketing strategy employed by RTLM, which enabled it to expand its audience dramatically in the build-up to the genocide. *Kangura* and RTLM carefully and gradually desensitized both the masses and future victims (and perhaps western observers as well) to ethnic violence. However, the coordinated effort by *Kangura* and RTLM to increase their market shares through the use of a jointly sponsored trivia contest in March of 1994 has largely been overlooked. The *trivia* questions were printed in *Kangura* and the answers to these questions could be found in previous issues of *Kangura* (58, 9-10). True to the style of both RTLM and *Kangura*, the contest utilized a simplistic writing style and relied, in large part, on gossip. The contest was promoted by RTLM and entries were submitted to the radio station. First prize was 25 thousand Rwandan francs, which in 1994 was roughly \$175 U.S (Appendix 1). The average annual income in Rwanda was \$210 U.S (World Bank 1995, 162). Since the Hutu were often farmers, many would have found the first prize to exceed their annual income. This prize money also would have been particularly appealing to the unemployed. Moreover, there was an explicit attempt to target young people, as *Kangura* offered additional prizes to students, including school fees.

As for the trivia questions themselves, several of the questions requested that the contestant identify the issue and page number in which particular stories appear, requiring a close reading of previous issues of *Kangura* (Appendix 2). The second question asked the reader to identify the author of a particular letter and provide the author's post office box. This question is only the first in a series of questions which call on consumers of anti-Tutsi propaganda to identify enemies of the cause. Among the most troublesome items, the tenth question required the respondent to identify individuals by district, who had previously been accused by *Kangura*, of having participated in the murder of CDR leader: Martin Bucyana. The third item in question ten called on the contestant to provide the address of the author of a particular sentence. Moreover, former Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana was clearly targeted as she was the correct answer to two questions: she was the

first to be caricatured in the nude (question #5a) and she was among the possible responses to the bonus question – which Prime Minister’s government arrested the highest number of journalists?¹⁴ The elite, thus, used both the radio and newspaper to scapegoat the Tutsi and desensitize the masses to ethnic violence. In the month before Habyarimana’s plane was shot down, *Kangura* and RTLM created a crossover audience, reacquainted this audience with malicious anti-Tutsi propaganda, in a manner that specifically targeted the youth by offering them additional prizes. Moreover, the use of a trivia contest, to which there are correct answers may have, subtly, elevated *Kangura* from a publication that essentially circulated anti-Tutsi gossip, to something factual, even prophetic in the minds of its readers. The contest required respondents to painstakingly re-read two years of vicious propaganda and compile a list of Tutsi and Tutsi sympathizers, in some cases, along with a physical address or district.

The Mob-Elite Alliance in Rwanda

The intellectual elite in Rwanda appear to have played a more direct role in exhorting the mob to acts of violence than did the German *intelligentsia*. Though the German political elite certainly benefitted from the support of the intellectual elite, it is not clear that the political elite actively sought their support, and doubtful that the political elite sought their counsel. In Rwanda, on the other hand, the intellectual elite were directly involved in efforts to desensitize the masses, train the militia and mobilize the mob. Nahimana was not only in a position to influence the decisions and strategy of the regime, the creation of RTLM was his idea. One other distinction between these two cases may involve the mob. In the Rwandan case, there were multiple mobs initiating violence at the behest of the political elite. As Scott Straus notes, attempts to identify the *Interahamwe* have been rendered virtually futile by the conflation of the terms *Interahamwe* and *génocidaire* (2006, 27). The *Interahamwe*, properly speaking, was the youth group associated with the MRND; it was in many cases joined by the *Impuzamugambi*, the youth group and armed militia associated with the CDR. Linda Melvern reports that the *Interahamwe* was initially recruited from a soccer club; its recruits, subsequently, came from unemployed young men, young men displaced by the encroaching RPF, along with Hutu refugees from Burundi (Melvern 2006, 118). As such the *Interahamwe* shared much in

¹⁴ The cartoon is accompanied by an article which argues that Uwilingiyimana is unfit to occupy the office of Minister of Primary and Secondary Education because of a sexually promiscuous past (*Kangura* 36, 4).

common with Arendt's mob. Anger, resentment and unemployment were prevalent, as were rootlessness and statelessness. The mob, of which Arendt writes however, while subject to the coordination of the political elite, was certainly never subject to military training.

As Scott Straus (2006) and Timothy Longman (2010) note the Rwandan genocide was nationally organized and locally executed. As such any discussion of an elite-mob alliance must be mindful of both the local and national levels. The elite-mob alliance at the national level was extremely well coordinated, owing to the multitude of roles played by relatively few individuals and the mob's military training. At the local level burgomasters, traditionally charged with insuring regional security, either helped organize the violence or abdicated their responsibilities, claiming powerlessness (Straus 2006, 73-75; Longman 2010). In those few instances when the burgomaster insisted on protecting the local population, outcomes were quite different (Straus 2006, 94). The abdication on the part of the local elite created a leadership vacuum in which violence flourished. While the local elite was likely powerless to alter the convictions of the mob, the mass holds no such convictions. Hence it is with the mass that the local elite's resistance could have been highly effective. Examining different communities both Straus and Longman conclude that the local elite were of considerable import in determining whether the local masses actively participated in the massacres.

Philip Verwimp (2005), Straus (2006), and Longman (2010) examine the local dynamics in Rwanda. Though none of the three explicitly distinguishes between initiators of violence or the mob and perpetrators who joined the effort over time, Verwimp identifies characteristics of peasant perpetrators from rural household surveys. He finds that typically one male member of the household participated. The combination of father and son participating was rare and in female headed households, the oldest son typically participated, suggesting that participation of the masses was treated as an *umuganda* style obligation, rather than deriving from hatred or racism (Verwimp 2005).¹⁵ It bears noting that since this study is based on household surveys and members of the *Interahamwe* were hypothesized to be landless, Verwimp's sample may systematically exclude the mob (Longman 2010, 275-276).¹⁶

¹⁵ *Umuganda* is a tradition of community work in which, historically, each family provides one person to help with community projects, usually either the father or oldest son.

¹⁶ Longman (2010) argues that there was a group of unemployed, disaffected, young men who were repeatedly called on to carry out acts of violence in Kirinda. Those acts of violence were

Additionally, in analyzing cross-sectional patterns of violence, Straus finds that at the local level,

[i]nfluential rural elites...organized, legitimized and directed the killing within their communes...Next were a relatively small group of aggressive and often young men...These aggressive men killed and ...mobilized as many adult Hutu males as possible to join the attacks. They were the elites' principal enforcers (Straus 2006, 94).

Straus also examines one commune in which no genocide occurred: Giti. In some sense Giti was an anomaly. Giti was an MRND stronghold, though there was no armed *Interahamwe*. Straus attributes the absence of genocide in Giti to two primary factors: a burgomaster, who actively resisted violence and the arrival of the RPF in a neighboring region. When the cattle belonging to a Tutsi family were killed, the burgomaster had the young men arrested and jailed because he was concerned that an escalation of violence would follow. When asked about his decision to stand against the violence, the burgomaster simply replied, "One cannot fight for one's country by killing people" (Straus 2006, 86). In the case of Giti, attempts to mobilize the mob were thwarted by the local political elite who were able to hold out long enough for re-enforcements to arrive in a bordering region.

Similarly, Longman (2010) examines the role of the church in local culture, governance structure and, ultimately, in the execution of the genocide in two rural towns: Kirinda and Biguhu. In Kirinda, church leaders and the political elite constituted a small group that often overlapped, lived extravagantly and exploited local peasants. On the other hand, church leaders in Biguhu viewed empowering the peasants as their responsibility. They lived modestly and instituted numerous local, development programs. Moreover, church leaders in Biguhu used church doctrines and formal communications to discourage violence, rather than re-enforce the messages of the national, political elite. As a result of these various development projects, there was no disaffected group of unemployed youth which could be easily organized into a mob. Thus Longman argues as a result of the role played by local leaders, the church and the absence of a mob, Tutsi from Biguhu were lured out of Biguhu and killed, rather than being killed by their neighbors (Longman 2010, 288). In short, taken together Verwimp, Straus and Longman find empirical evidence to support not only Arendt's

initially directed against the Habyarimana regime and only later were the same group of young men mobilized by the MRND.

distinction between the mass and the mob but also the pivotal role played by the political elite in Rwanda.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research

Perhaps because as Manus Midlarsky suggests, they constitute two of only three “incontrovertible” cases of genocide in the twentieth century, the German and Rwandan genocides have already been compared and contrasted by scholars and laypersons alike with respect to a number of factors (Midlarsky 2005; Kagwi-Ndungu 2007; Straus 2009). One of the striking dissimilarities between the German and Rwandan genocides is the manner in which the killing took place. Arendt documents the gradual and systematic process by which dehumanization occurred in the German case, with particular attention to the concentration camps and the “ghastly marionettes with human faces” (Arendt 1958, 455). Dehumanization and extermination in Rwanda proceeded differently. In Germany the majority of deaths occurred in the latter stages, whereas in Rwanda most of the victims died in the first two weeks (Straus 2009). Structurally, in the absence of the camp system and other bureaucratic apparatus, which played an important role in the German genocide, the mob-elite alliance assumed a pivotal role in the Rwandan case. Among the innovative techniques introduced by the Rwandan elite was a trivia contest. This contest provided a considerable financial incentive for all Rwandans, though the valuable prizes may have made the contest particularly appealing to those typically associated with the mob: the young and unemployed. Additionally, Arendt’s distinction between the mob, the mass and two different groups of elites may provide a valuable conceptual tool in terms of wading through the myriad of explanations for perpetrator participation. In fact, the Rwandan genocide literature is characterized by a bewildering array of perpetrator motives. Some attribute participation to ethnically based oppression (Mamdani 2001); others suggest economic gain was the real motive (Gasana 2002a; 2002b). Still others cite a desire to maintain power, status (Longman 2010) or a profound cultural obligation to obey authority (Reyntjens 1996). In other words, perhaps the motives of the mob differ from the motives of the masses.

Moreover, Arendt’s distinction between the political and intellectual elite warrants further examination. In both the German and Rwandan genocides, a select group of academics used their status in order to justify a genocidal regime. The connections between and the multitude of roles played by the intellectual and political elite in Rwanda justify further examination of Arendt’s contentions. Some members of the intellectual elite

explicitly utilized scholarship to lend credence to the regime while others simply used the credibility associated with their status as members of the *intelligentsia*. Mugesera's status as an intellectual, for example, lent credibility to his efforts though there was no connection between his academic training and his commitment to a genocidal regime. Nahimana's scholarship, on the other hand, dealt with the underrepresentation of the Hutu in the Rwandan historical narrative. He used his scholarly work to justify the regime's policies and his status as an expert on Rwandan history to teach military personnel that the Tutsi would return to power unless the regime's policies were enforced (Melvern 2006, 42). While Mugesera and Nahimana would have to be classified as convinced members of a genocidal regime, Arendt's notion of mere cooperation also warrants re-examination. Recent genocide studies support a re-appraisal on this point. Manus Midlarsky (2005), for example, concludes that victim vulnerability constitutes a necessary condition for genocide to occur. In cases in which a sympathetic, external audience can be expected to intervene, victim vulnerability is diminished. Midlarsky also contends that previous unpunished violent outbursts prepare both internal and external communities for a non-response in the early stages of the genocide. Again, impunity contributes to a perception of victim vulnerability, thus increasing the likelihood of genocide. In light of Midlarsky's conclusions, even the *temporary* legitimization of a genocidal regime may increase the likelihood of genocide. Thus, Arendt's conclusion that the intellectual elite had no impact on the regime (1958, 339) warrants re-examination. In the aftermath of the German genocide, a vast literature emerged exploring the link between Martin Heidegger's existential philosophy and his authoritarian or fascist political leanings. Nahimana's scholarship has yet to undergo similar scrutiny, though he at some point shifted from attempting to re-introduce Hutu leaders into Rwandan history, to advocating genocide.

In this article I have suggested that both Arendtian scholarship, as well as, the comparative genocide literature could benefit from an empirical examination of some of Arendt's assertions. In short, the value of her work in the area of comparative genocides has yet to be fully explored. Though she used the term – totalitarianism -- to describe the *novel* phenomena that she witnessed in Nazi Germany, genocide has unfortunately proven to be a recurring experience. As such Arendt's case study may ultimately provide conceptual tools that are useful in the construction of testable hypotheses.

Appendix 1: *Kangura* Rules and Prizes

Starting with *Kangura* #58 the board of *Kangura* with the help of sponsors organized a competition that would disseminate its views amongst its readers. The prizes for the competition were given by sponsors who support our cause. As of *Kangura* #58 these are the prizes we intend to give out:

First Place: 25,000 FRW

Second Place: 16,000 FRW

Third place: a plane ticket for a round trip from Kigali to Bujumbura

Fourth place: a plane ticket for a round trip from Kigali to Gisenyi

Fifth place: a radio

Sixth place: six pairs of shoes

Seventh place: a watch

Eighth place: 100kg of potatoes, 100 chicken eggs and a “pagne”

Ninth place: 2 umbrellas and a towel (high quality)

Tenth place: enough notebooks to last a year for a student

Notes: If this competition is won by a student who studies in Rwanda, in primary or secondary school, *Kangura* will pay for his school fees for a whole year.

Sponsors might increase the funding for the competition; in this case, the prizes stated above will be increased. If a student ties with a non-student, something extra will be added to the student's prize. If a girl wins, one of the prizes soap and body lotion will be added to the prize.

Translated by Fidele Bingwa

Appendix 2: *Kangura* Quiz Questions

1. a) In which issue of *Kangura* can be found the date 22/02/1990 where Jesus talked to a person who had fallen down. Jesus gave him a message that he hid from the people he was suppose to give it. What was the message and to whom was it addressed?
2. a) Who wrote the letter that contains the sentence “we want to comeback in our country we aren’t asking for land to grow crops; other than agriculture there are many things we could do that help the development of our country”?
b) Who signed the letter?
c) What was his P.O. Box?
3. a) In which issue of *Kangura* can you find the sentence “Where were you as Habyarimana dissolved branches of the political party on July 5th, 1973?”
b) In which issue of *Kangura* did Habyarimana say “we guarantee that we won’t sustainable development with hatred and deceit amongst Rwandans”?
c) How many *Kangura* journalists have died? Who are they?
d) Antoine Mutabesherwa wrote a letter to the editorial of *Kangura*. In which issue of *Kangura* did was the letter published? What was the date of the publication? On which page could the letter be found?
4. In which issue of *Kangura* can you find the sentence “Parmehutu has never incited any kind of racial hatred”?
5. a) Who were the first politicians to have naked caricatures in a *Kangura* issue? In which month was the issue published?
b) Who did *Kangura* call “veterinarian by formation, apprentice politician with an incompetent government”?
c) When did *Kangura* write a letter to the American Ambassador? What did it thank him for? What did it ask him for? In what languages were the letters written?
6. a) In which issue of *Kangura* can you find the sentence “Accept that newspapers and you have trusted us, don’t worry in time you will vanquish the Inkotanyis.”?
b) Who appeared on the cover of *Kangura* 16? When was he born? When did he die?
c) Give the page number and the *Kangura* issue where the following sentence can be found “I implore you Rwandans; Hutus, Tutsis, and Twas, speak the truth, say what you wish for.”
7. a) In which issue of *Kangura* did Hangimana say that a mentally ill person can’t be charged with a crime; therefore, no one should file a complaint against his writing?
b) Who wrote the article, entitled “the generosity of the bird broke its neck”? In which *Kangura* issue was the article published?
c) In which *Kangura* issue was the article “Kanyarengwe is decreasing the number of Tutsis amongst us”
8. a) When did *Kangura* become the voice that protects and rallies the people?
b) “Rwanda and Burundi should be one country” was written in which *Kangura* issue?
c) What announcement was made by *Kangura* on February 2nd, 1993? To who was it addressed?

Appendix 2 continued: *Kangura* Quiz Questions

9. a) On what date did *Kangura* journalists visit Bujumbura to interview members of the Burundian government?
b) Which Burundian leader said “I’m not the son of the king; conflicts amongst kings are their concern”?
c) When journalist Habimana Kantano visited Ngeze Hassan in prison, in which dormitory did he conduct his interview?
10. a) Give the names of Cyangugu natives that *Kangura* accused of participation in the assassination of Bucyana?
b) Give the names of Butare natives that *Kangura* accused of participation in the assassination of Bucyana?
c) In which issue of *Kangura* can you find the sentence “Mr Jean Carlos, criminal like [illegible]”? Who wrote it? What’s his address?
11. Bonus Question: If you get this one right it could count for three questions you would have missed.
a) How many *Kangura* issues did we use to create this questionnaire?
b) How many times has Ngeze Hassan been arrested?
c) Which MRND Prime Minister’s government arrested the highest number of journalists: Nsanzimana’s, Nsengiyaremye’s, or Agathe’s?

Translated by Fidele Bingwa

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