

PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC
22, 1991

Paris, April

Diplomatic Envoy In Charge of Mission

N O T E

to the attention of the President of the Republic

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INTERVIEW WITH MR. JUVENAL HABYARIMANA,
President of the Republic of RWANDA

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Tuesday, April 23, 1991 – 11 am

President HABYARIMANA's arrival in France, from whence he will continue to Belgium, comes at a crucial time for the domestic development of RWANDA and the settling of the conflict with the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front) rebels,.

- either the logic of peace, pledged at the cease-fire agreement signed in ZAIRE on March 29, will prevail from now on, and, in parallel, the democratization announced by President HABYARIMANA on April 4;

- or else the entire sub-region risks losing this historic chance, and, like other parts of Africa, risks permanently committing to the logic of civil war, in which the current regimes can only be victims, whether in the short or long term.

I – THE CONTEXT OF THE INTERVIEW

a) – Several important developments have taken place:

1) – The conclusion of the mediation with which President MOBUTU has been charged in the past few months between the government in KIGALI and the RPF rebels; the agreement of the cease-fire signed in N'SELE on March 29 particularly included:

- the verification and control of the cease-fire by a group of neutral military observers, under the supervision of the Secretary General of the OAU: this post has been confirmed on a Tanzanian officer, General MBITA.

- the withdrawal of foreign troops as soon as the group of observers has been put into place, except for military advisors;

- the opening of a political dialogue, within fifteen days.

2 – The beginning of the process of democratization promised by the Rwandan head of state: the national synthesis commission, in fact, submitted its report on April 9. This should quickly lead to:

- constitutional reform, beginning on May 15, in order to authorize a multi-party system;

- the creation of multiple political parties, especially the transformation of the current single party, the MNRD ("National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development");

- the organization of legislative and presidential elections that could take place at the end of the year.

b) – The preparation by the UNHCR of an international donor conference, according to its mandate from the Summit of Heads of State of the region, which met in DARES SALAAM on February 19 of last year. This conference was supposed to have taken place at the end of October in order to find the funds necessary to:

- reinstall any refugees who wanted to come back to RWANDA;

- the permanent installation (and naturalization) of those who preferred to stay in their country of current residence (primarily UGANDA).

c) – The uncertainties and patterns of worry, however, remain extremely numerous:

- The Rwandan government's reticence to accept the cease-fire; authorities in KIGALI essentially fear the consequences of an agreement that puts the RPF in a privileged position of negotiation.

The Rwandan army has therefore, in the past few days, used the pretext of some skirmishes to try to oust the rebel elements from the few

positions they still occupied in the region of the volcanoes. In addition, significant deliveries of military equipment are being delivered to KIGALI.

- The wait-and-see attitude of the RPF: the rebel movement is effectively camping on maximalist positions; its two principal demands remain the creation of a national unity government (in which it would participate) and the integration of its troops into the Rwandan army. Presented as they are, these requests are unacceptable to the KIGALI authorities.

- The delays in the deployment of the group of observers: this is no doubt explained by the habitual slowness of the OAU, largely understandable given its lack of physical means; it is also due to the refusal of the Tanzanian government to allow its contingent of observers to participate.

- The slim margin of maneuver available to President HABYARIMANA: particularly, he must deal with the influence of an extremist Hutu environment, strongly represented both in the army and in his entourage.

II – TOPICS OF THE INTERVIEW

President HABYARIMANA will probably express his country's gratitude for the help of FRANCE in the past few months in several domains:

- the reassuring presence of the paratroopers from the NOROIT detachment, already extended twice since last October: even if their mission is still limited to the protection of French nationals;

- the military cooperation, reinforced in March by the dispatch of a D.A.M.I. ("Detachment of Military Assistance and Instruction") composed of thirty instructing officers;

- the recent decision to allocate a structural adjustments subsidy of 70 million Francs.

The following recommendations, in an attitude of comprehension, can be made with regard to the new requests that the Rwandan president will no doubt make:

1 – In connection to military matters, the authorities in KIGALI must know that they can continue to count on the support of FRANCE. The active presence of military advisors and the regular supply of munitions have testified to this in recent months.

Nevertheless, our support should not go against the reciprocal commitments

that the two parties made in signing the cease-fire. In this regard, our desire to see the letter and the spirit of the March 29th agreement respected could be communicated to President HABYARIMANA, and thus our wish for the group of neutral observers to be really operational on the ground as soon as possible. We are in communication with the OAU on this point, and we wish to provide them with the necessary logistic or financial support;

President HABYARIMANA could be encouraged to adopt an attitude of moderation. The Rwandan troops, effectively, hold a definite advantage on the battlefield.

As Mr. JOXE and your Chief of Staff suggested, the Rwandan head of state could be informed of the withdrawal of the NOROIT detachment, whose mission will become obsolete when the cease-fire comes into force.

Finally, President HABYARIMANA might ask you for increased military support to allow him to lead the democratization process in the interior of the country without the insecurity maintained by UGANDA compromising it running smoothly.

After more than six months of conflict and the losses and destruction that have been suffered, the Rwandan Armed Forces (F.A.R.) have substantial needs—the furnishing and restoration to an operational level of:

- tanks (replacement – renovation or repair of the total stock of armored vehicles),
 - artillery (in particular, the acquisition of 120 mm mortars),
 - helicopters (replacement – expansion of the fleet),
- and the corresponding training of specialists, especially for the helicopters.

2 – On the subject of domestic political development:

President HABYARIMANA will expect to be questioned on this point and is likely to announce some decisions that are currently under review in KIGALI.

We can therefore ask him to be precise about the timetable that he would like to adopt to install the pluralist regime that he announced.

The events of the past year in AFRICA show, in effect, that popular expectations cannot be contained for long.

3 – The diplomatic support of FRANCE could be the final topic of the interview. President HABYARIMANA knows that we have persistently acted as his country's counsel and advocate, in international situations as well as with his immediate neighbors.

The consulting group of the World Bank's meeting in PARIS, on March 20 of last year, recently furnished a new occasion for French diplomacy to emphasize the efforts at structural adjustment that RWANDA has agreed to. The Rwandan head of state will probably address this topic, not only to thank FRANCE for the speedy disbursement of the first 50 million Franc installment, but also to ask us to use our influence to obtain the quick payment of the other lessors' promised contributions.

President HABYARIMANA must, however, be aware that FRANCE's tireless efforts will become more difficult if RWANDA does not gain the trust of its neighbors through meaningful gestures.

This could be the occasion to address the topic of the necessary return of Rwandan refugees who would like to come back. The conference in DAR ES SALAAM happily concluded with reciprocal commitments from all the countries in the region. FRANCE is actively collaborating with the UNHCR on this matter. . / .

Gilles VIDAL.