

**A BRIEF PRAISE AND CRITIQUE OF JUDI REVER'S
*IN PRAISE OF BLOOD: THE CRIMES OF THE RWANDAN PATRIOTIC FRONT***

By Dr.Theogene Rudasingwa

In the volatile mix of Rwanda's traumatic history, Judi Rever's *In Praise of Blood: The Crimes of the Rwandan Patriotic Front* tells a painful story in 277 pages. You cannot read the book without feeling very sad, helpless and hopeless about the tragic stories of Rwandans.

From available public sources, interviews with Rwandans and non-Rwandans, Judi Rever provides a counter-narrative to RPF's dominant yet false narrative about the 1990s war and 1994 genocide. She puts RPA's Directorate of Military Intelligence(DMI) as the mastermind of crimes against Hutu in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. These crimes, she asserts, as I do, amount to genocide.

Judi Rever asserts that there was genocide against Tutsi. The central theme that runs through *In Praise of Blood* is that while many of the perpetrators of genocide against Tutsis have been prosecuted and punished, none within the RPF's political-military establishment have been brought to account for their crimes against Hutus. She attributes this deliberate failure to the role of the United States in protecting the RPF regime and the biased role of the ICTR which, though with a mandate to prosecute and punish such crimes, decided not to.

Judi Rever's *In Praise of Blood* posits a thesis as a counter-narrative thesis to RPF's.

However, there are some areas of her thesis over which I would like to put on record my strongest reservations and disagreement:

A) RPF's POLICY OF EXTERMINATING HUTU

As of now, there is no official, objective, or scholarly history of the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF). Nor has there been such objective history on RPF's military wing, the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA). Formally, RPA military struggle was supposed to be under the overall political leadership of the RPF. In formal structures, the notorious and much-dreaded Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) is a directorate in the military establishment whose function was to collect military intelligence. This formal arrangement was copied from Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM), the National Resistance Army (NRA) and its DMI.

Judi Rever uses RPF, RPA and DMI interchangeably but in reality each served a different function before the 1990 invasion from Uganda, during the period 1990-1994, and after RPF came to power.

RPF had a formal 8-point political program that defined its ideology. None of the eight points included exterminating Hutu. The battle cry of the time was "we are going back home," to unite

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all Rwandans. This is the ideology I am aware of. There is no doubt that there was need for change in 1990, just as there was need for change in 1959, and need for change now in 2018.

For having participated in this movement in 1990 I make no apologies. I firmly believe that it was initially intended to bring us Tutsi refugees back home, unite the country, bring about democracy, achieve peace, and build prosperity for all Rwandans.

The killing of General Fred Rwigyema at the beginning of the invasion, together with Dr. Peter Bayingana and Major Chris Bunyenyezi in quick succession, paved the way for Major Paul Kagame to assume total leadership of RPF, RPA and DMI. Had General Rwigyema lived, his political and consensus-building instincts could most probably have maintained a political-military balance, and curbed the influence of DMI.

Under General Rwigyema the RPF/RPA structure officially looked like this:

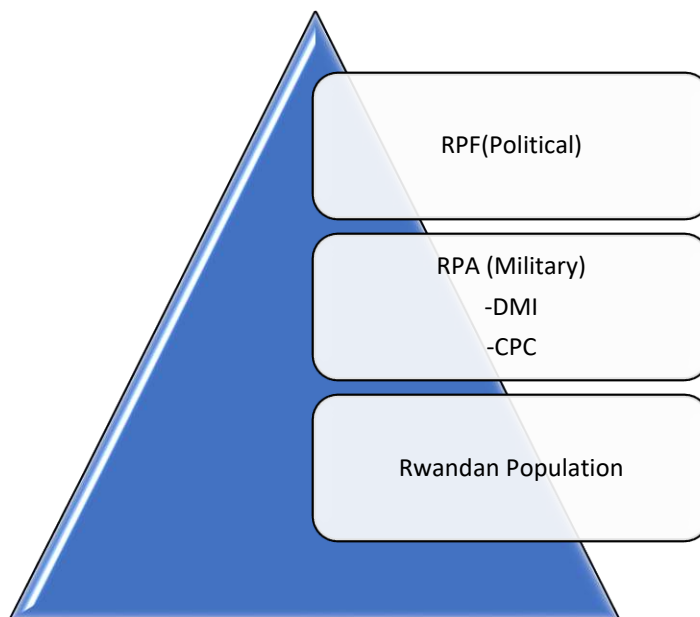


Fig.1

The office of the Chief Political Commissar (CPC) would have been used to inculcate the official ideology of the RPF, and entrenched the emphasis that the army was under political authority. The cadres of RPF (*abakada* in Kinyarwanda), both civilian and military (RPA), had a positive connotation. These were the disciples of the new movement, to be the champions and examples of fundamental change.

This hope died with General Rwigyema. With Major Paul Kagame, came his DMI instincts, perfected in the vicious crafts of *agafuni*, *kandoyi*, *summary executions*, and *deception* perfected in the Uganda's Luwero Triangle during the NRA days. Since he could not trust RPF politicians, nor RPA military commanders, DMI became the main instrument of power.

Progressively, the RPF became the political wing, and the RPA the military wing, of the DMI to execute the personal, political, and military aims of Major Paul Kagame.

From then onwards, effectively the informal structure under Major Kagame looked like this:

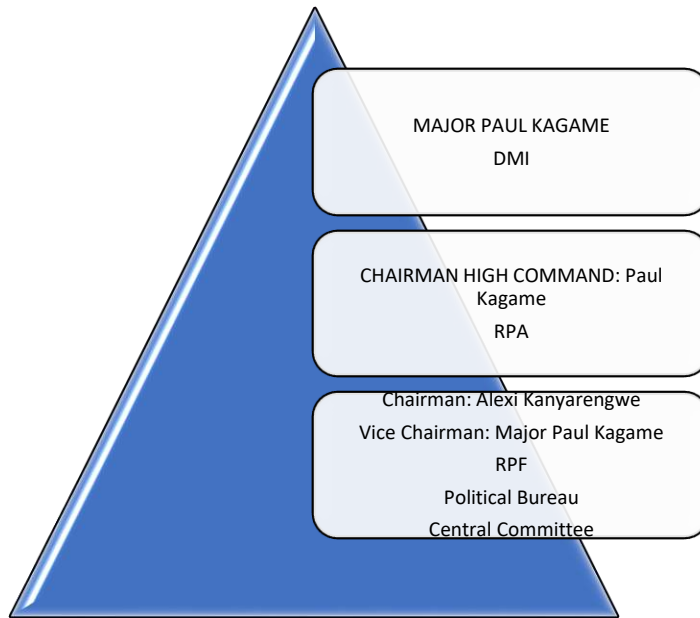


Fig. 2

After the Arusha Peace Agreement and the new structures of the RPF as a political party in August 1993, this informal structure remained in effect:

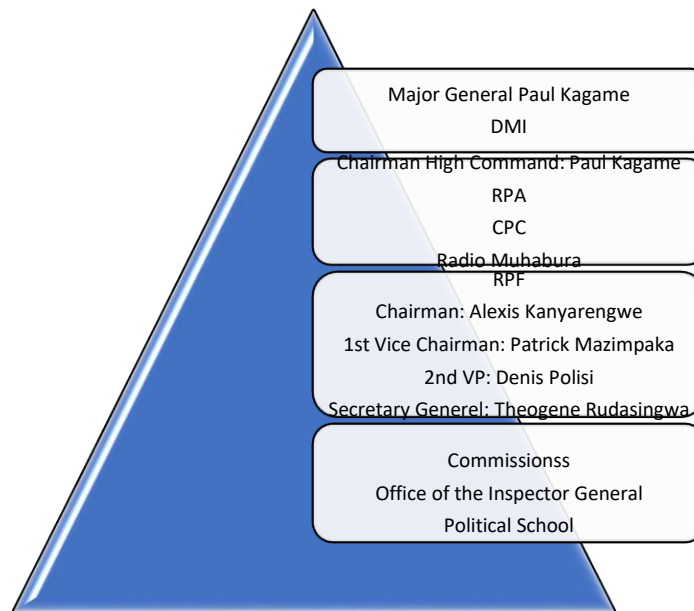


Fig.3

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Note that the key institutions like Radio Muhabura (Director: Wilson Rutayisire, also known as Shaban), Office of the Chief Political Commissar in charge of developing military cadres (led by Frank Mugambage), and the RPF Political School which trained political cadres-*abakada*-(heavily under the influence of Tito Rutaremara, Protais Musoni, Christine Umutoni and Aloysea Inyumba) received instructions and reported to DMI. The Office of the Inspector General, headed by Major Alphonse Furuma, could perform its independent function.

Since RPF came into power the essential structure that maintains Paul Kagame and DMI at the top of the Rwanda's societal pyramid has not changed.

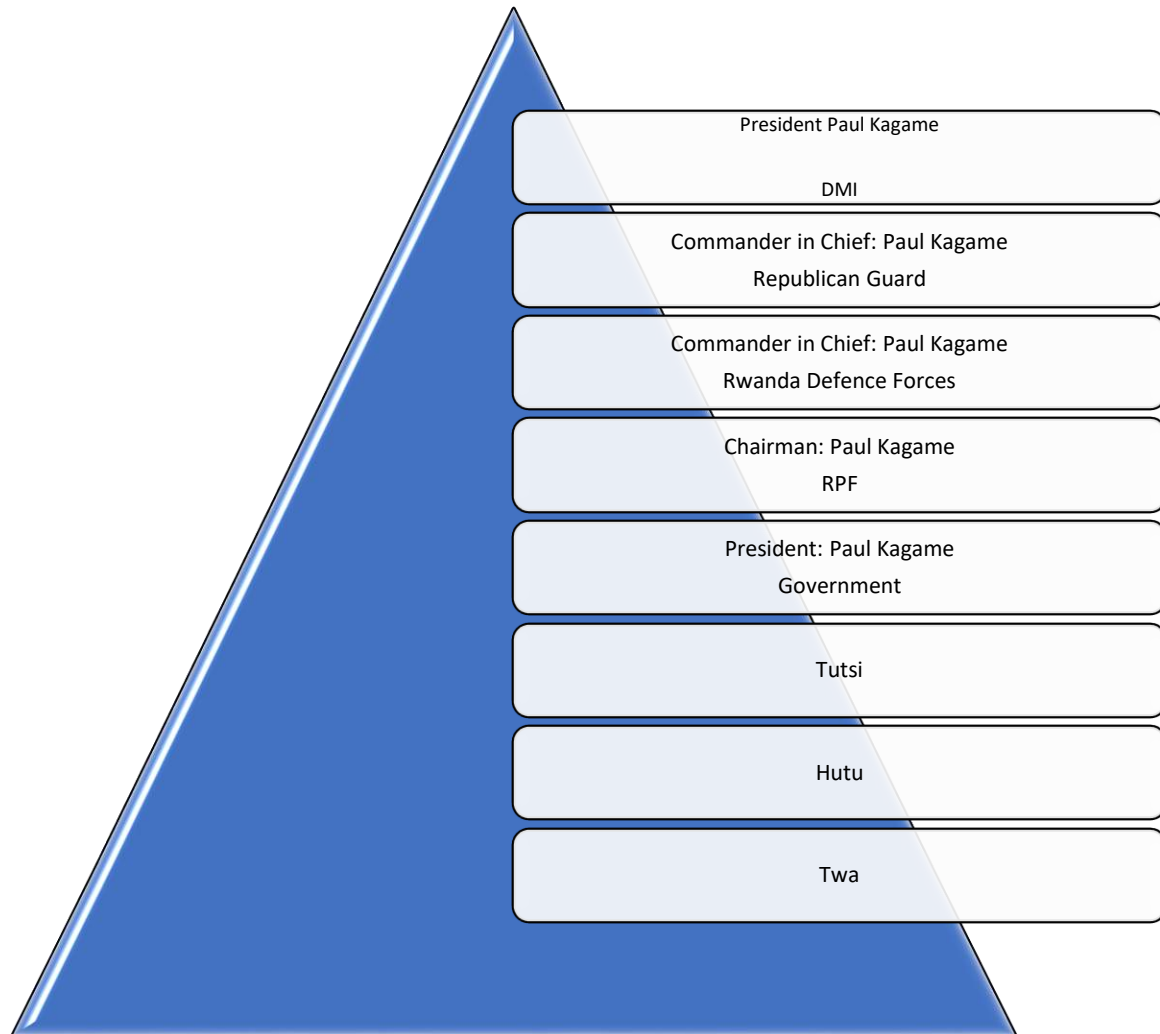


Fig.4

B) RPF INFILTRATION OF INTERAHAMWE TO HATE AND KILL TUTSI

There is no doubt that the main consideration for Paul Kagame and his colleagues in DMI was the conquest of power irrespective of the price for RPF members, RPA combatants, Tutsis in

general, and Tutsis in Rwanda in particular. His reckless behavior after the signing of the Arusha Peace Agreement, the shooting down of the plane carrying President Juvenal Habyarimana and President Cyprian Ntaryamira and their entourage, and the vigorous actions to prevent any international interventions bear testimony to Paul Kagame's DMI's risky behavior without considering the price.

It is also true that in the logic of the civil war, the protagonists (RPA and Government of Rwanda forces) did infiltrate each other's side.

On page 230, Rever states:

Kagame and his Ugandan-raise colleagues provoked and nourished Rwanda's 1994 genocide in order to seize power and hang on to it for a very long time. They potentiated the violence by infiltrating the Interahamwe in Kigali, Butare and Ruhengeri, and urging these youth militia to kill even more Tutsis. RPF commandos also infiltrated Hutu political parties and their youth militia to sow division, engage in ethnic baiting and foment violence. These commando agitators egged on the violence, murdered Hutu politicians and killed Tutsis at road blocks. These sinister, premeditated and deliberate acts fed the savagery. Infiltrating enemy ranks, fueling violence, and engaging in false flag operations were vintage tactics its young rebel fighters had learned while participating in Museveni's dirty rebellion in Uganda in the 1980s.

The thesis that RPF, RPA and DMI infiltrated political parties and their militia to hate and kill Tutsi goes too far to be believed in the absence of concrete evidence. This part of the thesis ignores the fact that RPA, RPF and DMI were largely Tutsi entities. Getting Tutsi to preach hatred and butcher for their fellow Tutsis to hardcore Hutu extremists and Interahamwe sounds downright callous. Hatred for, and killing of Tutsi, was commonplace in the First and Second Republics led by President Gregoire Kayibanda and President Juvenal Habyarimana respectively. The perpetrators of Tutsi genocide did not need to be taught hatred and the art of killing Tutsi by RPF/RPA/DMI. They were already experts, and had received enough training and equipment to commit the crimes.

C) THE STRUCTURE OF RPF VIOLENCE FROM 1994 THROUGH THE COUNTER-INSURGENCY

In Appendix A on page 234 (Fig.5) on next page, Rever delineates the structure of RPF violence from 1994 through the Counterinsurgency.

Under the RPF Secretariat, she writes:

- a political body headed by Theogene Rudasingwa that provided ideology and policy to DMI and other intelligence departments
- Drafted a code of silence equivalent to omerta that threatened death against any official, cadre or soldier who revealed crimes

In the footnote to the table, Rever writes:

Theogene Rudasingwa denies having ordered the killing of Hutus but acknowledges that he became aware in 1994 of RPF's extermination campaign. He says the policy came from DMI, not the RPF Secretariat.

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Furthermore in Appendix B, under the title “Criminals of the Rwanda Patriotic Front”, under the crimes of Kayumba Nyamwasa,(Page 236) she states:

He is allegedly responsible for the massacres of civilians in the demilitarized buffer zone between March 1993 and April 1994, a responsibility he shared with Chief Political Commissar (CPC) Frank Mugambage and the RPF Secretary General Theogene Rudasingwa and the RPF Political Bureau.

Again, under the crimes of James Kabarebe (Page 240), she writes:

He allegedly assisted in massacres of civilians in the demilitarized buffer zone between March 1993 and April 1994, a responsibility allegedly shared with DMI Chief Kayumba Nyamwasa, Chief Political Commissar Frank Mugambage and RPF Secretary General Theogene Rudasingwa of the RPF political bureau.

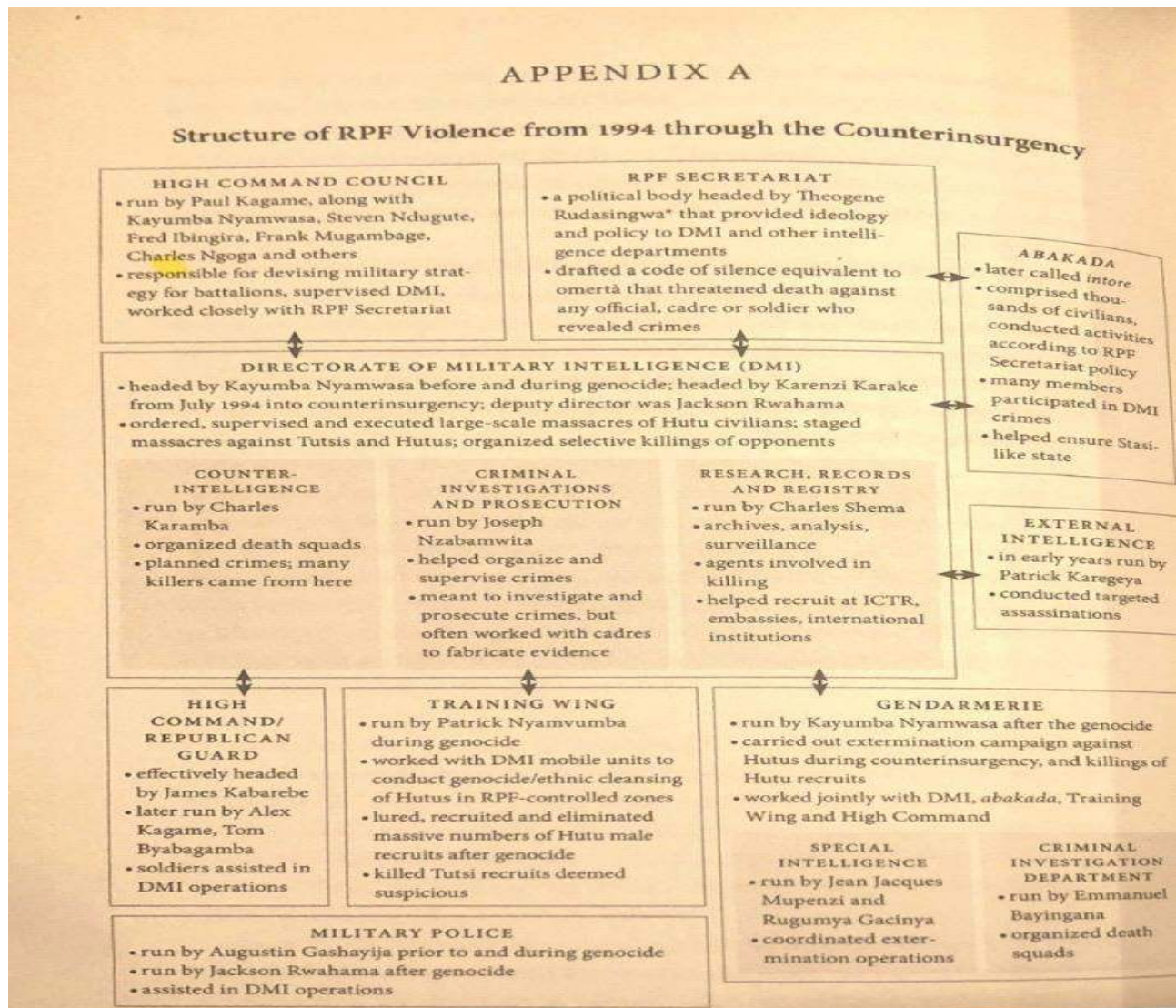


Fig.5

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Judi Rever's characterization of me as an RPF criminal is unfair, biased and completely false.

I have accounted for my life's journey and beliefs in *Rwanda Briefing* and three books, *Healing a Nation*, *Urgent Call* and *Voices from Exile*.

I further reject her assertion that the RPF Secretariat under me provided ideology and policy to DMI and other intelligence organizations (ref. Fig. 1, 2, 3, and 4 above).

The RPF Secretariat under me never "drafted a code of silence equivalent to omerta". Such a code does not exist. The only RPF code of conduct that members had to swear to preceded the 1990 invasion, and I neither believed it, never swore to it, and never asked anybody to swear to it.

I also vehemently disagree with the idea that cadres (*abakada*) in general, both civilian (RPF) and military (RPA), were involved in DMI killing activities. DMI had to recruit selectively within the RPF, RPA, and the civilian population in order to cover its tracks and conceal its dirty secrets.

As for being an accomplice with Kayumba Nyamwasa and James Kabarebe in their crimes in the demilitarized buffer zone between March 1993 and April 1994, let me say the following:

1. I joined the RPF on October 2, 1990, and received a two weeks military training. Before then I had refused to join RPF and opposed the militaristic methods of RPF/DMI then operating in Uganda. I was never loved by some in the upper echelons of the political and military structures of the RPF/RPA/DMI.
2. From October 1990 to March 1991, I worked as a medical doctor treating the sick and wounded RPA officers and men.
3. From 1991 to August 1993 I worked as RPF diplomatic outreach liaison, and later Director for Africa, in the Commission of Diplomacy headed by the late Patrick Mazimpaka. My other colleague was the late Dr. Jacques Bihozagara, who was the Director for Europe. I occasionally participated in the Arusha Peace Negotiations. In between my diplomatic errands, I stopped at the High Command to brief Major Paul Kagame, then Vice President of the RPF and Chairman of the RPA High Command. During this period, I never had any contact with the battlefield, or the demilitarized buffer zone. Until I became Secretary General in August 1993, I was not a member of the Political Bureau.
4. I was appointed the Secretary General of the Rwandese Patriotic Front in August 1993, as RPF prepared to participate in the implementation of the Arusha Peace Agreement. From that time until April 6, 1994, I never stepped into the demilitarized buffer zone. My activities were mainly around preparing RPF political party to become one among others in Rwanda, and the flurry of diplomatic activities at this time. I was in Paul Kagame's delegation to see President Ali Hassan Mwinyi of Tanzania, who then served as Facilitator of the Arusha Peace Agreement. I was, together with Patrick Mazimpaka and James Butare, the RPF representatives on a first ever joint delegation with Rwandan officials (including Foreign Minister Anastaze Gasana) which travelled to New York to meet then UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali to seek expeditious deployment of the

UN Peacekeepers. When Paul Kagame ordered the shooting down of the plane carrying President Habyarimana and President Ntaryamira, I was attending a Pan African Movement in Kampala, Uganda. During this period I was also in sharp disagreement with DMI over resettlement of 1959 refugees in properties left behind displaced Hutus, in contravention of the provisions of the Arusha Peace Agreement, and because it had not been discussed in the RPF Political Bureau.

5. I was appointed Ambassador to the United States at the end of 1995, and my tour ended in 1999. I was not present in Rwanda during the Counterinsurgency.
6. My short stay at the RPF Secretariat, my diplomatic duties in the USA, my 4-year stay as Paul Kagame's Chief of Staff, and my eventual divorce with RPF and final exile was due to gradual and irreconcilable differences with Paul Kagame and DMI.
7. Since running into exile I have publicly campaigned for truth-telling as the only pathway for healing, reconciliation and justice for all. In 2011, I affirmed that Paul Kagame was responsible for the shooting down of the plane in which President Juvenal Habyarimana and President Cyprian Ntaryamira of Burundi and all their entourage died. In 2012, I testified before Judge Trevidic in the French investigation, and subsequently to a Spanish judge in the indictment of 40 RPA officers. I sought to give expert testimony at the ICTR in Arusha but was never given an opportunity. With my other Rwandan colleagues in **Ishakwe-Rwandan Freedom Movement** and **The Rwanda Truth Commission**, I have called the crimes perpetrated by Paul Kagame and his associates in DMI/RPA/RPF as genocide against Hutu. In 2016, I named most of the criminals listed in *In Praise of Blood* as perpetrators of the genocide against Hutu.

I say all the above to show a record. I am not one with petty thought, adventurism, hatred, or one driven by violence and passions for power. I have been a victim of Hutu extremism, and fought it. I am now a victim of Tutsi extremism and I am actively fighting it.

I am only curious, intrigued and pained, that Judi Rever would not have given me a fair opportunity to explain myself, or elaborated somewhere in her story my role in such serious crimes as genocide, only to insert me in the structures of violence alongside notorious criminals at the very end of the book.

D) ANONYMOUS SOURCES

Rwanda's contentious politics are always pregnant with fear, risk, pain, life, and death. Being condemned to anonymity is one of the silent deaths that those with trauma have had to bear in the repeated cycles of violence.

It is indeed commendable that Judi Rever interviewed 200 RPF defectors, former soldiers, atrocity survivors, and consulted ICTR documents to give another version of the Rwandan story. It takes courage to tell such a story, given the risks to individuals and their families involved. Rever has kindly shared with readers her own moving trials and tribulations in the course of assembling this story.

However, it does not enhance credibility when anonymous sources make extensive claims calling for accountability for serious crimes, and they cannot stand up openly to account for their own words, allegations, and theories.

Consider the words of this anonymous source described as a prominent lawyer who worked at the Office of the Prosecutor, ICTR (Page 231)

Many of the graves in Byumba predated the shooting down of the plane. He had been cleansing Byumba before that. Kagame could not have accepted the peace agreement because the crimes of the Interahamwe had not yet occurred and the crimes committed by his troops had. So if there had been a peace-sharing process, there would have been internationals all over that region and those crimes would have been revealed pretty quickly. If the Arusha Peace Accord had been put in into place, all that area would have been opened up....Why did they need to continue the war in 1994, instead of agreeing to Arusha? Because they had to, they did not have a choice. They could not live with the peace. They couldn't live with the power transfer because there was a massive dark secret in Rwanda that they have been keepers of.

I have argued that indeed Paul Kagame and DMI, having gradually transformed RPF and RPA into tools of capturing power, did not care about collateral damage. There is no doubt that DMI systematically killed Hutus with intent to exterminate them in part or in whole, and methodically concealed the evidence.

Nevertheless, the theory that DMI's crimes preceded those of the Habyarimana's regime is not true. The regime's crimes were born with it in 1973, and the targets were not only Tutsi but Hutu from the south of Rwanda as well. From the invasion of 1990 onwards, human rights abuses by the regime were on the increase as evidence from Bigogwe, Kibilira, Bugesera and elsewhere testify.

It is equally erroneous to argue that Paul Kagame's decision to order the assassination of President Habyarimana, was primarily intended to hide the dirty secrets of DMI in Byumba. Kagame's primary and overriding goal was to capture power even when this meant derailing the Arusha Peace Agreement, triggering genocide against Tutsi, and concurrent genocide against Hutu. Hiding dirty secrets is an art and science that DMI has perfected from the bushes of Luwero triangle, unto the hills of Rwanda, and the jungles of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Paul Kagame and DMI were not the only ones who saw themselves as losers in the Arusha Peace Agreement. Habyarimana's regime and its extremist allies, including CDR and Interahamwe hated compromise and accommodation with Tutsis and democratic voices among the Hutu in the opposition. The competition between DMI, bent on capturing power by all means on one hand, and the Hutu extremist forces determined to maintain power at all costs on the other, became the high stakes, winner takes it all, zero-sum game race to the bottom.

CONCLUSION

In Rwanda's repeated cycles of violence, words have very powerful effects. Words have mobilized Rwandans to kill their neighbors. Words have been used to inspire followers during the three violent regime changes since 1959. Words become tools of deception and violent dictatorship when such regime changes are hijacked by ethnic-based cliques. When Rwandans

are denied the opportunities to narrate their stories, their individual, group and collective trauma become an existential challenge

Words can be an instrument of healing when people have the freedom to narrate their traumatic experience.

The final words in *In Praise of Blood* caught my attention, because they are words of a widow about her husband, Claudien Habarushaka (Page 233):

We cannot say Claudien was assassinated by the RPF”, his widow told me. There is no tribunal willing to prosecute his murder. We were not allowed to go to gacaca, Rwanda’s traditional courts. There has been no memorial. We can’t properly mourn his death. We don’t know what happened to his body, whether he was dumped in a mass grave, taken by the wind or eaten by dogs. We can’t purge our emotions. We have to pretend that nothing is wrong. But I will never accept it.

For us Rwandans, work remains to be done to respond to the yearnings of this widow and millions of Rwandans trapped in the vicious cycle of violence, changing positions as victims and perpetrators. The widow cries for justice, the right to mourn and remember, and close a chapter on a loved one through discovery of the fate of her husband’s body. She is a widow in need of healing because she does not like faking it, and vows never to accept it.

Judi Rever’s *In Praise of Blood* may not be the most authoritative, complete and final history of genocide in Rwanda. You may not agree with the entire package. Like all works, it is not intended for you to do so. Yet, it is an important addition to the voices of Rwandans and others in the world community who refuse to accept RPF’s dominant narrative that seeks to obstruct the course of justice and accountability for crimes masterminded by Paul Kagame and his DMI.

As studious student of Rwanda’s painful and ongoing story, Rever must have discovered how difficult and agonizing it is to tell Rwanda’s contentious story in a disinterested or objective way. It is especially so with Rwandans who are active or passive players in the tragic drama, and no less daunting for foreigners who have to rely on Rwandans as sources. Passions run high from proponents of the multiple narratives of Rwandan long and winded history. Often, the truth is the first casualty, as the dominant power cliques assert, by all means possible, their narrative to be the whole and only truth. The losers of yesterday cling to their old ideas in the hope that the past can be restored. Foreigners take sides to amplify and sustain the ruling ideologies of the day.

Judi Rever’s courage, stamina, endurance and resilience is very evident as she seeks to give a voice to those who cannot speak for themselves, especially the Hutu victims who are marginalized in their own country, or living in exile.

In Praise of Blood tells a painful and heart-breaking story. You can contest it, or embrace it in its totality. You cannot ignore it. I strongly recommend that you read this book.

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