

CRUMBLING IN EXILE: THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE RWANDAN OPPOSITION

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Abstract

L'opposition rwandaise se disloque au fur et à mesure à cause de son exil prolongé. Les partis d'opposition ont été rongés par des politiques rivales sur la scène extérieure, sapant ainsi les demandes d'un 'dialogue inter-rwandais' qui amènerait une démocratie consensuelle et la réconciliation au Rwanda. Il y a des regroupements constants et les divisions régionales et ethniques ont mené à la rupture des organisations. Une vague radicale est en train d'accabler toute l'opposition en exil et certains groupes sont divisés entre le 'pouvoir' et le chemin 'modéré'.

Le Front Patriotique Rwandais (FPR) continue à monopoliser le pouvoir à Kigali. Le régime dirigé par le FPR a profité de la révolte Hutu dans l'est du Congo et sa soi-disant «idéologie de génocide» afin de pouvoir interférer dans les affaires congolaises et étouffer les libertés politiques et civiles au Rwanda, avec le soi-disant objectif d'éviter le resurgissement d'un nouveau génocide. Il a réussi à faire passer l'ensemble de l'opposition extérieure comme de «miasmes de génocide», qui a mené au désintérêt de la communauté internationale. Par conséquent, des membres de l'opposition extérieure considèrent maintenant des alternatives aux pressions politiques qui ont été utilisées jusqu'à présent. Certains opposants du régime ont été radicalisés par leur exclusion du paysage politique rwandais et ont comme objectif une confrontation militaire avec Kigali, tandis que les Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) ont renoncé à leur lutte armée et ont promis de se transformer en organisation politique. Les FDLR ont proclamé la fin des hostilités et a communiqué un désir de revenir au Rwanda sous réserve de sécurité et d'existence politique de l'opposition. D'un côté, la communauté internationale a salué le comportement des FDLR. De l'autre, Kigali a ignoré les demandes en faveur de dialogue, et continue de profiter du discours basé sur «l'idéologie de génocide» afin d'éliminer toutes formes d'opposition.

Le désarmement et le rapatriement des FDLR pourraient amener la communauté internationale à se concentrer sur les problèmes internes du Rwanda et non plus sur les «éléments négatifs». Kigali pourrait se retrouver dans une position maladroite au long terme si la communauté internationale commence à le percevoir comme intransigeant. L'ensemble de la diaspora politique devrait essayer de résoudre l'impasse politique intérieure, car la présence physique d'une opposition au Rwanda est de toute nécessité pour une ouverture politique. Une opposition forte au Rwanda est nécessaire pour préparer éventuellement le terrain d'un «dialogue inter-rwandais».

1. INTRODUCTION

The Rwandan opposition is disintegrating, as a consequence of its prolonged existence in exile. In 2004, regional and ethnic divisions were eating away the exiled movements. Opposition parties were engulfed in rival politics on the external scene, discrediting its calls for an «inclusive inter-Rwandese dialogue» that would bring consensual democracy and reconciliation to Rwanda.

The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) continues to monopolise power in Kigali, criminalising, persecuting or co-opting any opposition. The RPF-led regime has made use of the Hutu rebellion in eastern Congo and its alleged «genocidal ideology» to interfere in Congolese affairs and to suppress political and civil liberties in Rwanda, purportedly to prevent a new genocide from taking place. It has vilified the overall external opposition as «genocidal miasmas» or associates of «negative elements,» succeeding in its disregard by the international community. As a result, some elements of the external opposition are now fatigued and resigned, while others are considering alternative paths from the pressure politics followed hitherto. Certain opponents of the regime have been radicalised by their exclusion from the Rwandan political landscape and are aiming for a military confrontation with Kigali. On the other hand, the Congo-based Hutu rebels and moderate Tutsi found in exile may repatriate to Rwanda, aiming to transfer the opposition to the Rwandan interior. This chapter will explore the changing nature of the Rwandan opposition in exile.

2. ANATOMY OF THE RWANDAN OPPOSITION IN EXILE

The opposition in exile can be broadly grouped into three ideological factions, which cut across political movements. There are those who are nostalgic of the pre-1994 (Hutu-dominated) state. They are revisionist with regard to the genocide and maintain a double genocide discourse, which aims to level out the obliteration of Hutu and Tutsi. Others (predominantly Tutsi), half-heartedly oppose the Kagame regime. Although they aspire for a change of leadership, they do not seek a structural change of the system, partly out of mistrust of Hutu numerical preponderance. A third group constitutes the genuine opposition. It favours fundamental political change and ethnic reconciliation. Parties are divided between those members belonging to the first or second group and those belonging to the third group; ‘power’ wings and ‘moderate’ wings appear to be emerging.

2.1. Fragmentation

In June 2004, the intestinal struggle of the politico-military Rwandan Democratic Liberation Forces (FDLR) ostensibly came to an end.¹ The armed

¹ A scuffle for FDLR political leadership transpired in 2003, leading well into 2004, between two seemingly regional blocs. A *kiga* (northern Rwandese) bloc, led by FDLR Vice-President Jean Marie Vianney Higiroy, Secretary-General Félicien Kanyamibwa, Justice and Human Rights Commissioner Marie Goretti Abayizigira and Spokesman Augustin Dukuze, was vying for control of the movement against a *nduga* (southern Rwandese) bloc, formed around Ignace

wing of the predominantly Hutu organisation, based in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) – the *Abacunguzi*² Combatant Forces (FOCA) – that forms its greater part, expressed support for FDLR President Ignace Murwanashyaka.³ The *kiga* faction was ousted from the movement and set up a more radical splinter group, the Rally of Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (R-FDLR-*Urunana*)⁴ in September. The R-FDLR prolonged the FDLR conflict by repudiating the FOCA. It claimed that the FOCA was created by Murwanashyaka and Hakizabera in collusion with the former Commander General Paul Rwarakabije and current Commander General Silvestre Mudacumura, in order to facilitate their collaboration with Kigali and the eventual surrender of the combatants. The R-FDLR affirmed that the FOCA creation was discordant with the FDLR statute.

The R-FDLR has maintained a similar configuration to that of the FDLR. It is structured around an Executive Committee,⁵ Regional Resistance Committees and Local Resistance Committees in Europe, North America, Asia and Africa.⁶ The movement also claims to have formed an army, based in Rwanda – the *Armée Nationale* (AN).⁷ It allegedly sought out young people in Rwanda, who had received clandestine military training, with the backing of people *within the government*.⁸ The AN purportedly has soldiers in Congo-Brazzaville, the DRC, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe.⁹ The R-FDLR asserts that the AN is not yet in a position to fight but protects Rwandans in

Murwanashyaka, External Affairs Commissioner Christophe Hakizabera and the present-day Spokesman Anastase Munyandekwe (see previous *Annuaire*). See also FDLR, *Réaction du Comité Directeur des FDLR sur le Communiqué de Presse AFFGEN N°2/Juin/04*, Brussels, 25 June 2004.

² I.e. the liberators of Rwanda.

³ In May 2004, the FOCA sided with Murwanashyaka. Yet, the Higiroy bloc maintained that the FOCA would alter its position (see previous *Annuaire*). In June the FOCA High Command reiterated its support for Murwanashyaka.

⁴ *Urunana* signifies unity, in depicting a chain of people holding hands.

⁵ President: Jean Marie Vianney Higiroy; Vice-President: Marie-Goretti Abayizigira; Secretary-General: Félicien Kanyamibwa; Finance Commissioner: Bonaventure Hakizimana; External Relations Commissioner: Jacques Byilingiro; Political Affairs and Inter-Rwandese Dialogue Commissioner: Alexis Nshimyimana; and Spokesman and Information Commissioner: Augustin Dukuze.

⁶ *Ralliement des Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda*, 12 September 2005.

⁷ R-FDLR, *Déclaration du Ralliement des Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (R-FDLR)-Urunana*, Washington, 6 December 2004.

⁸ Interview with Jacques Byilingiro, 6 April 2005.

⁹ According to a source who does not wish to be disclosed, the AN is allegedly under the command of Colonel Zigabe (the High Commander), Major Petero Kabacha (the Chief of Staff, based in eastern Congo), Major Silas Nteziyaremye (based in Congo-Brazzaville) and Major Nsezerano Shikamo (based in Tanzania). The professed leadership is spread, despite claims that the army is predominantly found in Rwanda (Interview made on 13 May 2005).

the interior and in neighbouring countries and will serve as a pressure tool on the government to succumb to the negotiating table.¹⁰

The Alliance for Democracy and National Reconciliation (ADRN-*Igihango*), which grouped the FDLR with the monarchist *Nation-Imbaga*, broke down in mid-2004. Until June 2004, the northern bloc of the FDLR had predominantly been involved with the *Igihango* alliance. However, following the rupture of the FDLR political leadership, *Imbaga* refused to work exclusively with the R-FDLR. *Imbaga* was suspended,¹¹ as it had withered with the gradual departure of the bulk of its members who did not wish to collaborate with the FDLR, and could no longer function outside of the alliance due to its diminutive membership.

The National Democratic Pact (PDN), which mainly stemmed from Tutsi-led ARENA,¹² held its Congress in November 2004. The provisional Executive Committee, consisting of the party's founding members, was confirmed.¹³ There has been little expansion of PDN membership – a sign of disillusionment with exiled politics. The Congress broached the prospect of pursuing political activities in Rwanda, comprehending that opposition politics need to be transferred to the Rwandan interior.¹⁴ As a final point, the Congress set up an ad hoc committee to enhance cooperation with other opposition movements and with civil society associations.¹⁵

Since the departure of the bulk of the Tutsi-dominated Movement for Peace and Development (MPD) from the Rwanda Democratic Alliance

¹⁰ The R-FDLR aims to *capture a part of Rwandan territory*, following the RPF's example in October 1990, which had forced the Habyarimana government to negotiate with other political movements.

¹¹ Interview with Joseph Ndahimana, 14 April 2005.

¹² The PDN was formed in March 2004 as a breakaway movement of the ADRN-*Igihango* alliance. The majority of PDN members came from ARENA, which dissolved in favour of the new grouping. There were also political figures coming from *Nation-Imbaga* and new recruits (see previous *Annuaire*). It was originally named PDN-*Igihango* but the latter part of the designation was abandoned due to a boisterous row with the ADRN alliance, but also because it was causing much confusion among prospective members (Interview with Deus Kagiraneza, 27 April 2005).

¹³ President: Augustin Kamongi; Pierre Vice-President: Célestin Rwigema; Secretary-General and Spokesman: Déo Mushayidi; Deputy Secretary-General: Gervais Kalisa; Treasurer: Gérard Karangwa; Administrative Secretary: Evariste Sisi; Justice and Human Rights Secretary: Edouard Kayihura; Information and Documentation Secretary: Jean-Marie Nkusi Ntwali; Secretary in charge of Political Mobilisation in North America: Jean Bosco Sibomana; Secretary in charge of Culture and Youth in Europe: Deus Kagiraneza; the Secretary in charge of Culture and Youth in North America: David Rwamugenza; and Secretary in charge of Finance in North America: René Mugabo.

¹⁴ Among those proposed to return are Déo Mushayidi, Gérard Karangwa, Jean Marie Vianney Nyarwaya, Albert Uamahoro and Evariste Sisi (Interview with Déo Mushayidi, 9 April 2004).

¹⁵ PDN, *Communiqué de Presse*, Washington, 26 November 2004.

(ADR) in 2004, the ADR has begun to focus on increasing its membership. There is now a large section operating in Kampala and it claims to be very active in Rwanda. The ADR has also devised a mechanism to facilitate the flight from Rwanda of people in danger.¹⁶

The MPD has been dissolved in favour of a new political formation. Former Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) Majors Alphonse Furuma and Frank Bizimungu joined forces with former Minister of Defence General Emmanuel Habyarimana, RPA Representative in the Transitional National Assembly Colonel Balthazar Ndengeyinka¹⁷ and former Minister of the Interior and founder of LIPRODHOR Theobald Rwaka, to create *Inteko y'Igihugu-Ubumwe*¹⁸ in August 2004. *Ubumwe*'s political programme revolves around social justice and equality, development and unity. It is not a military movement, despite the involvement of military personalities. The founding members have acknowledged that the Rwandan impasse can only be overcome politically, with the unity of all Rwandan ethnic groups.¹⁹

The Union of Rwandese Democratic Forces (UFDR) has survived the differences between its component parties. The Republican Rally for Democracy (RDR) and the Democratic Forces for Resistance (FRD) maintained their common political programme at the UFDR Congress held on 25 September 2004.²⁰ Nonetheless, the parties are principally active independently rather than jointly at the alliance level.²¹

A new group has recently appeared on the Rwandan external opposition scene. The *Rassemblement du Peuple Rwandais* (RPR) was created in 2005 in the US, under the leadership of former RPA Major Eugène Rurangwa.²² The RPR is a Tutsi organisation, which claims to have links to former *mwami* Kigeli V. It is reputedly raising the *Ingabo z'Umwami*²³ to overthrow Paul Kagame and reconcile Rwandans under Kigeli. RPR members are found in eastern Congo, Tanzania and Uganda.

Another Tutsi party, *AMAHORO*-People's Congress, which is based in North America, continues to exist at the margins of the Rwandan external opposition.

¹⁶ Interview with Jean Baptiste Mberabahizi, 28 April 2005.

¹⁷ General Habyarimana was an ex-FAR officer, who had condemned the genocide in 1994. He was Minister of Defence until November 2002. Ndengeyinka was also an ex-FAR officer. They fled Rwanda in 2003, due to rumours that they would be accused of «divisionism.»

¹⁸ I.e. The Country's Objective – Unity.

¹⁹ Interview with Emmanuel Habyarimana, 12 May 2005.

²⁰ E-mail exchange with Charles Ndereyehe.

²¹ Interview with Jean de Dieu Tulikumana, 26 April 2005.

²² Other members include Modeste Museke (Political Commissioner) and Josua Rugamba (Defence Commissioner).

²³ I.e. the King's Army.

2.2. Attempts to Unify the Opposition

The end of 2004 witnessed an attempt to resuscitate the political opposition in exile. In September, the FRD appealed to the Rwandan political parties in exile to come together in a platform that would offer a united, though not exclusive, front. The FRD also evoked the need to connect with the Rwandan interior and the rank and file.²⁴

A *Forum on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region* was held in Amsterdam between 26 and 28 November 2004 by the Burundian, Congolese and Rwandese diasporas, subsequent to the summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, held in Dar Es-Salaam on 19-20 November. The ADR and UFDR organised a meeting parallel to the Forum where all Rwandan civil society associations and political parties in exile were invited. This «Amsterdam initiative» aimed to create the new platform for cooperation. *AMAHORO*, the PDN, the R-FDLR²⁵ and *Ubumwe* did not respond to the bid, while the FDLR was unable to attend, due to internal problems facing the movement. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jean-Marie Vianney Ndagijimana also entered the exiled scene, representing the European Federation of Rwandan Associations (FEDAR). The participants concluded with a criticism of the Rwandan regime. They appealed to the Rwandan population to stand up to the government, while they called on the international donor community to interrupt financial aid to Kigali.²⁶

A committee was set up to carry on the «Amsterdam initiative»²⁷ and it organised a second meeting in Brussels on 29 January 2005. The exiled Rwandan political organisations, representatives of civil society organisations²⁸ and politically active individuals, such as former Prime Minister and 2003 Presidential Candidate Faustin Twagiramungu were

²⁴ FRD, *Déclaration*, Brussels, 24 September 2004.

²⁵ Although the R-FDLR did not officially attend the meeting, it was indirectly represented by its Finance Commissioner, Bonaventure Hakizimana, who was a delegate of the civil society organisation *Dusabane, N.G.R.* and by the representative of the Forum for Justice, Peace and Tolerance (FOJUPET), Eugène Shimamungu, who is believed to be a member of the R-FDLR.

²⁶ *Déclaration d'Amsterdam de l'Opposition Démocratique et de la Société Civile Rwandaises en Exile*, Amsterdam, 28 November 2004. The declaration was signed by UFDR President Ingabire Umuhiza, ADR President Mberabahizi, Ndagijimana and Shimamungu.

²⁷ The signatories of the *Amsterdam Declaration* formed the follow-up committee.

²⁸ Albert Rukerantare represented the radical civil society organisation *Collective de Survivants du 6 Avril 1994* (COSAR) and Shimamungu and Ndagijimana attended the second meeting as well.

invited. The political parties that had ignored the Amsterdam gathering were, on the other hand, excluded. Faustin Twagiramungu distanced himself from the external opposition. Hence, he did not attend the meeting. Twagiramungu now aims to launch a new political party in Rwanda in 2006. He is in contact with politicians in the interior to this end, rather than with the diaspora.²⁹

At the meeting, the opposition pored over the problems that inhibit its unity. The vast ideological divide and the leadership strife that continue to plague the opposition in exile did not allow for the achievement of a minimum consensus and no substantial agreement, other than a critique of the RPF was reached during the meeting. Consensus was, however, reached on the failure of the external opposition's strategy hitherto, of trying to sway the international community in favour of the exiles' viewpoint, thus pressuring Kigali to open the Rwandan political space. They discussed the possibility of forming a common platform, which would look for alternative options. A committee, composed of ex-FAR Major Hanyurwimana, ADR President Jean-Baptiste Mberabahizi, RDR President Victoire Ingabire Umuhoya and FRD President Eugène Ndahayo, was designated with the task of setting up the platform.³⁰

In March 2005, the UFDR proposed a potential structure of a common platform of the Rwandan opposition in exile (*cadre unifié de l'opposition démocratique Rwandaise*), which would be composed of the participants of the Amsterdam and Brussels meetings. The projected platform would either take the form of a consultation and coordination forum or an alliance of parties. The first structure entails the creation of an «*International Rwandan Council in Exile*» (*CIRE*),³¹ which would function as a parliament in exile. Political parties but also individuals not affiliated to any political party would be included in the forum. It would, therefore, also be open to individuals coming from civic associations, though civil society associations as such could not form part of the platform. Participants could communicate their views and discuss solutions on an equal basis. The «*CIRE*» would be run by an executive committee of three party and three civil society representatives. The second structure, an alliance of political parties, would preserve the particular identity of each party, while working closely within a consultation structure – the «*Rwandese National Congress*» (*RWANACO*). The parties would elect a Director's Committee consisting of a President, two Vice-

²⁹ Interview with Faustin Twagiramungu, 6 May 2005.

³⁰ Interview with Joseph Ndahimana.

³¹ *Conseil International Rwandais en Exil*.

Presidents, a Secretary-General and a Deputy Secretary-General. Individuals who are not members of a political party would not, therefore, participate in this structure.³²

In many ways, the two projected formations are reminiscent of the endeavour to form the «Rwandan National Congress» (CNR) in 2003, which achieved the exact opposite to the result intended, bringing about divisions among the exiled organisations and the eventual suspension of the Permanent Consultation of the Rwandan Democratic Opposition (CPODR). The idea of a '*parliament in exile*' was jointly concocted by the ADR and RDR in 2003. However, it is no longer well received by the ADR. The ADR has changed its stance on the exile political scene and it is trying to break out of the external opposition's political cul-de-sac. «CIRE» and «RWANACO» are indicative of the contentment of doing politics in exile.

Personal antagonisms explain the indifference of individuals and of certain parties to the «Amsterdam initiative.» Twagiramungu's rivalry with former associates in the ADR and UFDR would not have bolstered the purpose of consolidating, hence strengthening, the opposition in exile, while among *Ubumwe*'s founding members are former RPA officers who had broken away from the ADR, due to their personal agendas. The R-FDLR–FDLR feud did not augur well for the platform, either. The Tutsi-led *AMAHORO* has consistently eschewed cooperation with other political parties and has, in fact, avoided cooperating with Hutu or ethnically mixed organisations. The PDN, on the other hand, was excluded because of its decision to change trajectory, moving from exile back to Rwanda. A further factor impeding cooperation and coordination under a common platform is the fact that the exiled opposition leadership is scattered around Europe and North America. This dispersal makes it all the more difficult to coordinate under an umbrella organisation. A negative development on the external opposition scene is the connection of exiled 'civil society associations' with political parties, as certain exiled civic associations are fundamentally revisionist. Although civic associations are by nature apolitical, there is an overlap of their membership with that of political parties and they may possibly be offering a veil for the political ambitions of their leaders.

3. THE END OF THE HUTU REBELLION?

³² UFDR, *Cadre de l'Opposition Démocratique Rwandaise. Faisabilité, Conditionnalité et Contraintes*, 15 March 2005.

By the latter part of 2004, international pressure on the FDLR combatants in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) mounted. The role of Kigali in the June 2004 Bukavu mutiny and Rwandan threats to invade the DRC, in order to destroy the FDLR on 25 November,³³ added to the determination of the international community to conclusively resolve the problem of the Hutu rebellion in the Congo. This would eliminate Kigali's «security threat» pretext to justify interference in the DRC.

The 1999 Lusaka Accords and the 2002 Pretoria Agreement hold the DRC government responsible for the disarmament and repatriation of «negative forces» on its territory and accusations abounded against Congolese President Joseph Kabila of lending support to the FDLR. In November 2004, MONUC called on the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) to forcefully disarm the FDLR.³⁴ Yielding to international pressure, Kabila set upon the FDLR. In November and December 2004, the FARDC clashed with the FDLR in the Walungu area of South Kivu.³⁵ However, Kabila was soon deciding to seek a negotiated agreement with the FDLR, in the hope of gaining credit by the international community for his venture.

Negotiations in Rome

After the slaughter of Congolese refugees at Gatumba camp in Burundi in August 2004, ethnic tensions were high in the Great Lakes region.³⁶ Despite a *Human Rights Watch* investigation, incriminating the Burundian FNL,³⁷ Kigali unremittingly attributed the massacre to the FDLR acting in unison with the FNL. Kigali stirred up fears of a new genocide, by reference to the «negative forces» inculcated with a «genocidal ideology», which are at large in the region. In September 2004, the *Sant'Egidio* religious community attempted to set in motion a dialogue between the Rwandan government and the FDLR, in order to ease the tension. However, Kigali obdurately refused to

³³ See Human Rights Watch, *Democratic Republic of Congo: Civilians at Risk During Disarmament Operations*, 29 December 2004.

³⁴ AFP, 6 November 2004.

³⁵ Interview with FOCA Spokesman, Edmond Ngarambe, 8 April 2005. The FDLR claim that the FARDC had attacked them due to criminal activities committed by a Rwandan group known as the *Rasta*, which simulates FDLR attacks and are unjustly attributed to the FDLR.

³⁶ The refugees were mainly Banyamulenge, which aroused fears of anti-Tutsi sentiments.

³⁷ Human Rights Watch, «Burundi: The Gatumba Massacre. War Crimes and Political agendas», *Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper*, New York, September 2004.

discuss with the FDLR, as this would allow it to pose as a valid interlocutor. The initiative was abandoned until December 2004, when Kabila requested the *Sant'Egidio* community to facilitate his peace initiative regarding the FDLR. *Sant'Egidio* agreed to engage in the process, on the condition that Kinshasa would identify the FDLR leaders.

A Maï Maï governmental faction identified the FDLR leaders and their positions.³⁸ Having verified the main actors in the field, the Congolese government dismissed claims that the R-FDLR commanded authority over the combatants. Hence, the R-FDLR was excluded from the ensuing negotiations. The Minister for Regional Cooperation Mbusa Nyamwisi contacted the FDLR in Lubero, North Kivu,³⁹ while Kabila's National Security Advisor Samba Kaputo made contact with the FDLR in South Kivu in December 2004. Father Minani of the *Sant'Egidio* community in Bukavu played a key role in bringing together Kinshasa and the FDLR.⁴⁰ The mounting external pressure on the FDLR to disarm swayed the politico-military movement to the negotiating table.

On 5 February 2005, a Congolese commission led by Mbusa Nyamwisi, Samba Kaputo, and Kabila's roving ambassador, Antoine Ghonda Mangalibi, met with representatives of the FDLR political and military wings⁴¹ in Rome, under the auspices of the *Sant'Egidio* community. The Europe-based FDLR political wing subsequently set out to the eastern DRC. A series of internal consultations on the Rome process took place between 27 February and 15 March. Ignace Murwanashyaka and Christophe Hakizabera met with the FOCA High Command, brigade commanders, operations commanders and staff officers,⁴² who agreed to proceed with the negotiations. The FOCA had been preparing for incursions into Rwanda since January 2005 but the option was set aside.⁴³

³⁸ Interview with Edmond Ngarambe. The FOCA are found in the Maï Maï area and have fought alongside the Maï Maï on many occasions in the past.

³⁹ Nyamwisi is the leader of the RCD *Kisangani-Mouvement de Libération* (RCD-K/ML). He originates from North Kivu and had cooperated with the FDLR in the past.

⁴⁰ Interview with Father Matteo of the *Sant'Egidio* community, 10 May 2005.

⁴¹ Ignace Murwanashyaka, Christophe Hakizabera, Anastase Munyandekwe, Edmond Ngarambe and three combatants made up the FDLR delegation.

⁴² There are eight FOCA brigades – three in North Kivu, three in South Kivu and two reserve brigades found between North and South Kivu – each consisting of three battalions of some 600 combatants.

⁴³ Interview with Edmond Ngarambe.

Negotiations culminated in a declaration made by the FDLR on 31 March 2005. In the presence of *Sant'Egidio* and a Congolese delegation,⁴⁴ the FDLR condemned the 1994 genocide, renounced its armed struggle and pledged to transform into a political organisation.

In its declaration, the FDLR alludes to undefined measures to accompany the declaration, in order to voluntarily disarm and return peacefully to Rwanda; it commits to cooperate with international justice; it condemns crimes committed in the Great Lakes region and calls for an international inquiry to identify and punish those responsible; and it demands the return of Rwandan refugees under humane conditions. The declaration concludes on the necessity of *a political opening*, which would assure a *durable and peaceful resolution of the Rwandan and overall Great Lakes region conflicts*.⁴⁵

3.2. Conditions Come into View

On 2 April 2005, representatives from Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, the UK, the US and the EU Special Representative's Office gathered in Rome to follow up the FDLR's declaration. The Congolese delegation and the *Sant'Egidio* community brought the international community up to date on the negotiations.⁴⁶ The FDLR's first official encounter with the international community ensued, where the FDLR elaborated the meaning of its declaration. In a third meeting, the international community discussed how to make the Rome Declaration operational, while

⁴⁴ The DRC delegation was headed by people from Kabila's entourage – Samba Kaputo and Antoine Ghonda. Mbusa Nyamwisi was not present at the Rome Declaration. It seems that Kabila wants full credit for the peace deal with the FDLR. The Congolese Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Mbwinga was also part of the DRC delegation (Interview with Anastase Munyandekwe). The FDLR was represented by President Ignace Murwanashyaka, Vice-President Straton Musoni, Christophe Hakizabera, Anastase Munyandekwe, and a FOCA delegation led by Deputy Force Commander Colonel Kanyandekwe, alias Komez Baptiste. Major Junior Muramba of the FOCA High Command, Social Affairs Commissioner Gabriel Mikekemo, Deputy Human Rights Commissioner Vincent Miranzi, Inter-Rwandese Dialogue Commissioner David Mukiza and Edmond Ngarambe formed the rest of the FOCA delegation (Interview with Ignace Murwanashyaka, 11 April 2005). According to the Congolese government and to MONUC, the FOCA delegates are in control of different field operations and are, therefore, representative of the *abacunguzi* combatants (Interview with Father Matteo of the *Sant'Egidio* community).

⁴⁵ *Déclaration des Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda*, Rome, 31st March 2005.

⁴⁶ Interview with Straton Musoni, 16 May 2005.

the FDLR and Congolese delegation met separately to draw up a provisional timetable for FDLR disarmament, demobilisation and repatriation.

The timetable envisaged repatriation within 90 days⁴⁷ from the day of the declaration, taking place in three main phases. It anticipated the establishment of an international Follow-Up Committee (*Comité de Suivi*), to oversee the application of the declaration and to verify that the «accompanying measures» were effective in both the DRC and Rwanda. It also foresaw a Steering Committee (*Comité de Pilotage*), composed of a DRC and an FDLR team, which would conduct the disarmament and repatriation operation. Within 30 days, the FDLR areas of operation would be demarcated, the combatants and refugees would be identified and an exploratory mission to Rwanda by FDLR combatants would take place, to evaluate if the conditions were appropriate for the return of the combatants and their families, under the protection of the international community. Five days later, operations would begin – the combatants and refugees would head towards the transit centres set up by MONUC,⁴⁸ the combatants would be disarmed and those refugees wishing to repatriate would do so. Those unwilling to return would be granted refugee status and could either remain in the DRC or relocate to a third country.⁴⁹

FDLR demands revolve around two main axes. Their first demand concerns security guarantees and a fair treatment upon the repatriation of the combatants and their families. The organisation has demanded an international monitoring body to guarantee this. FDLR combatants declare their steadfastness to repatriate for *a better life in Rwanda, but they will not return to die*. The omnipresence of Rwandan security services and paramilitary forces is one of the main preoccupations of the combatants. After having lived in precarious conditions for eleven years, they need assurances for their physical integrity.⁵⁰ The second request spotlights the political situation in Rwanda. The FDLR calls for a political opening, which will allow

⁴⁷ The FDLR had produced a 120-day timetable (*Mise en application de la Déclaration des FDLR*, 1 April 2005), but the Congolese delegation did not agree to it.

⁴⁸ The centres are found in Hombo, Sake, Lubero, Walungu, Sange, and Kanyabayonga (IRIN News, *DRC-Rwanda: Rebel group ready to disarm*, Nairobi, 5 April 2005).

⁴⁹ *Calendrier du retour des réfugiés rwandais*, Rome, 1 April 2005.

⁵⁰ The FOCA emissaries have indicated that the majority of the combatants, in fact, want to repatriate but on conditions (Interview with Father Matteo).

an authentic opposition to function in Rwanda,⁵¹ and for a reform of the judicial system.⁵²

3.3. The FDLR's Relationship with Kigali and the International Community

The FDLR's isolation appears, at first sight, to have ended. *Sant'Egidio* has turned the international community's attention to the FDLR. The International Committee in Support of the Transition in the DRC (CIAT) has congratulated the FDLR and Kinshasa for the Rome agreement and the UN Security Council has applauded the FDLR for condemning the genocide⁵³ and declaring its desire for peace.⁵⁴ For the first time, the international community has openly approached the FDLR. Nevertheless, and despite its commitment to end the presence of Hutu rebels in the DRC, the international community seems reluctant to stand up to Kigali.

On 1 April, the Rwandan government sent a communiqué to Rome designating the FDLR as ex-FAR/*Interahamwe* and ALiR/PALiR.⁵⁵ Kigali appealed to the morality of the international community and expressed its concern that «*the United Nations, the European Union and some countries plan to sit on the same table with a group that committed the last horrific genocide of the 20th Century.*»⁵⁶ In response to Kigali's reaction to the Rome Declaration, the delegations present were led by diplomats or desk officers, rather than high-ranked government officials, to avoid giving the impression that the FDLR was seen as equivalent to the government.

⁵¹ *Sant'Egidio* had stressed the importance of avoiding attaching conditions in the Declaration. Instead, *guarantees* offered a way around the problem.

⁵² FDLR, "Les FDLR sont convaincues que la mise en application de la Déclaration de Rome ramènera la paix et la Démocratie dans la région des Grands Lacs", *Communiqué de Presse N°01/PP/FDLR/MAI/2005*, Brussels, 11 May 2005

⁵³ The fact that they had condemned the genocide at Bad Honnef in March 2002, when the ADRN-*Igihango* alliance was created notwithstanding, this has been hailed as a breakthrough in the Rwandan Hutu rebellion. The FDLR had also signed the *Edenbridge Initiatives Declaration* on 26-27 October 2001, which condemned the 1994 genocide, the massacres that took place between 1990 and 1994, the assassination of Juvénal Habyarimana, and the massacres of Hutu refugees in the DRC between 1996 and 1997 and they pledged their support of the ICTR.

⁵⁴ United Nations Security Council, *S/PRST/2005/15*, New York, 12 April 2005.

⁵⁵ ALiR/PALiR was proclaimed a terrorist organisation by the US in 2001.

⁵⁶ Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, *Communiqué*, Kigali, 1 April 2005.

Kigali spurns any dialogue with the FDLR, claiming that FDLR combatants will be received on an individual basis, but not collectively as an organisation.⁵⁷ The Rwandan government has made preparations for the repatriation of the combatants. The Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Christine Nyatanyi, has prepared a comprehensive plan with an accompanying budget for the reception and reintegration of the FDLR and their families. The plan defines the precise location points where refugees will cross the border, the reception centres for the returnees, as well as the food, medical care, transportation and cash provisions.⁵⁸ The government has not, however, distributed the plan to the combatants, which would gain their trust and reinforce their voluntary disarmament and repatriation.

The international community will help the returnees in retrieving properties and in reintegrating those combatants, who are screened as appropriate, into the Rwanda Defence Forces.⁵⁹ It will have the right of oversight of the repatriation of the FDLR and their families, to ensure that they are treated «*in accordance with applicable standards of international law and with respect for the rights and freedoms of human beings.*»⁶⁰ It will also guarantee that there will be no forced repatriation. Those unwilling to repatriate will be granted refugee status in third countries, on the condition that they have not been indicted for genocidal crimes.⁶¹

The FDLR have made a palpable presence on the military scene of the Great Lakes region. However, due to the combatants' stealthy position, Kigali has succeeded in politically marginalising the FDLR, vilifying the FOCA for years as ex-FAR/*Interahamwe* or combatants inculcated with a «genocidal ideology». Consequently, Kigali has been able to dismiss FDLR claims to be regarded a legitimate political actor. FDLR political leaders have tried to influence MONUC to press Kigali into contacting the movement,⁶² while Kinshasa has asked that Kigali distinguishes the alleged *génocidaires* from the remainder of the FDLR, so that the process would not be broken.⁶³ Yet, Kigali is unyielding. It maintains that the responsibility to disarm the FDLR lies with the Congolese government.

⁵⁷ Letter dated 4 April from the Permanent Representative of Rwanda addressed to the UN Security Council President, S/2005/223.

⁵⁸ Interview made on 13 May 2005.

⁵⁹ Interview with Aldo Ajello, 12 May 2005.

⁶⁰ United Nations Security Council, S/PRST/2005/15, New York, 12 April 2005.

⁶¹ Interview with Aldo Ajello.

⁶² Interview with Straton Musoni.

⁶³ AFP, Kinshasa, 1 April 2005.

3.4. Stalling the Repatriation Process

The implementation of the Rome Declaration was due to take effect from 5 May 2005, according to the provisional timetable. The FDLR is now delaying operations in the absence of an international Follow-Up Committee and in a meeting with the head of MONUC, William Swing, Ignace Murwanashyaka stated that respect for human rights and a political space for the opposition in Rwanda were non-negotiable points for repatriation. On 11 May, the FDLR leadership began its «sensitisation» tour of eastern Congo. The FDLR delegation refused to travel under the protection of the FARDC and MONUC was not permitted to join them. The DRC and MONUC conceded on the condition that the delegation returns with an *actual* timetable for repatriation. The FDLR leadership claims that the indications have so far been positive but that the combatants will not disarm if conditions are not met. The latest exodus of Rwandans, who are fleeing the *gacaca* tribunals, has aroused fears among the combatants⁶⁴ and they are also wary of the arrest of RDF officers, such as Colonel Patrick Karegeya, who were receptive to the FDLR peace offer.⁶⁵

The process is currently at a standstill, as Kigali and the FDLR leadership are obdurate in their stance. Kigali has refused to join the international Follow-Up Committee. It wants to use the Tripartite process to support MONUC and Congolese efforts to disarm the rebels, under the scrutiny of Belgium, France, the EU, UK and US.⁶⁶ The FDLR insists on the international Follow-Up Committee and the Steering Committee. The DRC has prepared a team for the mixed DRC-FDLR committee and the FDLR claims that it has set up a mechanism for its participation therein, which will be run by the FDLR President, External Affairs Commissioner and the Congo-based Political Affairs Commissioner. The FDLR is now waiting for

⁶⁴ Rumours were circulating that people would be unfairly condemned by *gacaca* or killed by the RDF, leading to the flight of many Rwandans to neighbouring Burundi and Uganda. Kigali has charged the FDLR with spreading rumours, in order to recruit combatants from among the new refugees in Uganda and Burundi (IRIN News, *Rwanda: Refugees could be joining rebel groups, minister says*, Kigali, 21 April 2005), while the FDLR accuses Kigali of “terrorising” the population by means of the *gacaca* tribunals (FDLR, “Les FDLR sont convaincues que la mise en application de la Déclaration de Rome ramènera la paix et la démocratie dans la région des Grands Lacs”, *Communiqué de presse N° 01/PP/FDLR/MAI/2005*, Brussels, 11 May 2005).

⁶⁵ Interview with Straton Musoni.

⁶⁶ Interview with Aldo Ajello.

elections of its Director's Committee on 25 June to determine who will occupy the positions.⁶⁷

Should the FDLR not abide by its commitment to disarm and demobilise, the international community will be compelled to forcibly disarm the combatants. The FDLR has stretched the patience of the international community. MONUC has been threatening to end the voluntary nature of the disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement (DDRRR) programme since the end of 2003 (see previous *Annuaire*). Forced disarmament will either be undertaken by the FARDC, by MONUC or an African Union (AU) force. The FARDC is technically too weak to engage in such an operation.⁶⁸ By contrast, MONUC now has the capacity to disarm military groups forcibly. Although such action does not fall within MONUC's mandate, certain latitude is provided by its revised mandate, which allows for civilian protection. The AU force in co-ordination with MONUC offers the most plausible choice, as the AU has resolved to disarm the Rwandan «negative elements» by force.⁶⁹ The position of Patrick Mazimpaka – a prominent RPF figure – as Vice-President of the AU is telling of Kigali's influence of the decision. If the FDLR were to be forcibly disarmed, Kigali could present itself as the indisputable victor over all «genocidal forces,» which would bolster its legitimacy.

3.5. Saving the Rome Dynamics

The Rome momentum must be sustained, as it is crucial to the pacification and transition process in the DRC. It appears to have encouraged many refugees from the DRC to return to Rwanda and it will contribute to the normalisation of relations between the DRC and Rwanda. The *International Crisis Group* has called on the Rwandan government to «pick upon the

⁶⁷ The mandate of the FDLR Director's Committee effectively ended on 1 May 2005. Elections were delayed, owing to the preoccupation with the Rome peace offer. The candidates for the FDLR elections are: Ignace Murwanashyaka, Christophe Hakizabera and Emmanuel Hakizimana (President); Straton Musoni and John Mulindo (Vice-President); Victor Byilingiro, (2nd Vice-President); Karadani and Muhozi (Secretary-General); and Sirock Moneza (Deputy Secretary-General).

⁶⁸ Antoine Ghonda, speaking on *Radio Okapi* on 5 May 2005, said that Kinshasa would not resolve to forced repatriate of the FOCA, as it required material, technical and financial resources, which Kinshasa does not possess and also because it would lead to the death and displacement of Kivutian civilians.

⁶⁹ African Union, Communiqué of the twenty-third meeting of the Peace and Security Council, *PSC/AHG/Comm. (XXIII)*, Libreville, 10 January 2005.

*opportunity provided by the Rome Declaration to establish contact with relatively moderate FDLR military commanders and give them concrete incentives to return home [...] the goal for Kigali and Kinshasa should be to marginalise the FDLR hardliners.»*⁷⁰ Kigali needs to open the lines of communication with the FDLR, in order to resolve the prolonged conflict with the rebels. Informally, it has long been in touch with the FDLR, as witnessed from the defection of the former FOCA Commander in November 2003.⁷¹

In April 2005, there were rumours that Kigali was, in fact, negotiating with the FDLR. The Rwandan Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, Richard Sezibera, was rumoured to have been in contact with Ignace Murwanashyaka during his stay in Kinshasa, for the second Joint Verification Commission (JVC) meeting with the DRC on frontier security. The fact that Antoine Ghonda led the DRC delegation to the JVC on 3 May, while holding parallel meetings with the FDLR leaders, also hints at the likelihood that discussions may have taken place.

Many international actors are questioning the authority that Ignace Murwanashyaka and his entourage command over the FOCA.⁷² Murwanashyaka has been accused of a bellicose attitude in the past⁷³ and of not paying heed to the combatants' problems. He was allegedly unwilling to renounce the armed struggle, against the wish of the majority of his organisation's members. The FDLR leadership may be impeding voluntary

⁷⁰ International Crisis Group, *The Congo: Solving the FDLR Problem Once and For All*, Nairobi, 12 May 2005, p. 10. Following General Paul Rwarakabije's defection from the FDLR, Kigali accused «FDLR hardliners» of preventing combatants from disarming and repatriating to Rwanda. Kigali identified Commander Silvestre Mudacumura, Christophe Hakizabera, 2nd Vice-President Gaston Iyamuremye (alias Victor Byilingiro) and present-day R-FDLR-Urunana leaders Jean-Marie Vianney Higiroy, Félicien Kanyamibwa and Alexis Nshimiyimana as hardliners. (*Letter dated 10 December from the Permanent Representative of Rwanda addressed to the UN Security Council President, S/2003/1164*).

⁷¹ Former RDF Spokesman, Patrick Karegeya, admitted that the RDF contacted the FOCA on many occasions (see previous *Annuaire*).

⁷² Interview made on 13 May 2005. The authoritative nature of Murwanashyaka predates the 2003-2004 internal FDLR struggle. The FDLR had allegedly been created by military figures, indicted by the ICTR. Colonel Tharcisse Renzaho, Colonel Aloys Ntiwiragaba and Colonel Protais Mpiranya had put in place an ostensible political leadership that had not been tainted by association with the genocide. Nevertheless, ultimate power lay in military hands. After the arrest of Renzaho in 2002, Ntiwiragaba and Mpiranya fled the Congo and could no longer command the FOCA, leaving a power void. The situation was aggravated with the defection of Paul Rwarakabije, which spun off the leadership struggle.

⁷³ ADRN-Igihango, *Pas de surprise: l'événement du printemps 2002 finit en eau de boudin*, Brussels, 17 February 2003.

repatriation by playing on the combatants' fears of the dangers involved in an unconditional return. The combatants have grown weary of drawn-out warfare and the FOCA military muscle has weakened, subsequent to years in foreign territory. With the loss of support from Kinshasa, resulting in the decline in arms and ammunition, the FOCA was left with little choice but to seek to put an end to military engagements. The FDLR leadership does not, however, share the majority combatants' tribulations. Whereas for the combatants there may be better future prospects in their repatriation, for the leadership potential political gains are at stake through negotiations with Kigali.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Kigali does not tolerate any *genuine* internal opposition and claims that the FDLR combatants may only return individually like all other refugees and will be granted the same treatment.

Kigali rejects dialogue with the FDLR, on the pretext that it is a criminal organisation with a «genocidal agenda.» The FDLR will not, therefore, be permitted to exist in Rwanda. Yet, Kigali is inconsistent in its accusations. People suspected of genocide crimes are part of the RPF-led regime. Furthermore, Kigali embraced former FOCA Commander Paul Rwarakabije and his fellow combatants Jérôme Ndengahimana and Major Thadée Nizeyimana – all ex-FAR combatants – and reintegrated them into the RDF, despite coming from an alleged criminal organisation. General Paul Rwarakabije's defection had been hailed as a victory for Kigali in 2003 and indeed was initiated by Kigali, whereas the FDLR's Rome declaration robbed Kigali of its potential 'victory' over the remaining FDLR troops in the DRC. The regime refuses to consider a different political orientation and persistently excludes any form of opposition, choosing to criminalise it.

4. THE PARTING OF WAYS

Despite attempts to unify the opposition, the parties in exile are drifting apart – divisions and rivalries have proved stronger. The FDLR appeals for a political opening, judicial and security sector reforms are shared by the overall external opposition. Exiled political parties have long called for the liberation of prisoners of conscience. They have deplored the unfair justice system in Rwanda and demanded the liberation of prisoners and an

⁷⁴ Following Rwarakabije's defection from the FDLR, there were whispers that part of the FDLR leadership had agreed to the Commander's repatriation, judging that the majority combatants would follow him, thus allowing for the FDLR leadership to return to Rwanda as interlocutor (see previous *Annuaire*).

investigation of crimes committed since 1990. They have likewise denounced the Rwandan military and paramilitary forces. The FDLR has been at the centre of international attention, since its peace proclamation in March. However, rather than reinforce the FDLR's – and by extension the opposition's – demands through joining forces, the other exiled political parties have opted for a distinct path.

As the FDLR was declaring peace, the «common platform of the opposition» was following its distinctive trajectory. In a “Memorandum to European Governments” on 31 March 2005, the ADR, FRD and RDR were petitioning for a «*diplomatic and economic embargo on the regime [...] to force it to create the political space necessary for the exercise of a pluralist democracy.*»⁷⁵ This memorandum and the FDLR Rome Declaration notwithstanding, the European Union continued its financial support to Rwanda, offering it €52 million for its budget deficit.⁷⁶

The FDLR's former partners in the *Igihango* alliance, regrouped in the PDN, were the only external political opponents of Kigali to express openly their support for the FDLR's commitment to a peaceful repatriation to Rwanda.⁷⁷ The PDN saw an opportunity to buoy the opposition. In view of the international community's resolve to see the Rome declaration through, it saw the opportunity to put forward the opposition's grievances against Kigali. The PDN attempted to mobilise the Rwandan exiled parties in support of the Rome initiative, hence forming a «*positive opposition*» that would aim to take form in the country.⁷⁸ However, the breakaway R-FDLR disparaged the FDLR declaration as a «*disguised surrender*»⁷⁹ and the rest of the opposition parties fell into a deadly silence. Ironically, at the very moment when the FDLR appeared ready to follow a pacifist route, the greater part of the Rwandan external opposition began to adopt a radical stance. The ‘power’ wings of parties are becoming more dominant and discussions of the merits of shifting to a military path are starting to prevail.

⁷⁵ *Memorandum to European Governments*, Brussels, 31 March 2005.

⁷⁶ IRIN News, *Rwanda: EU grants Kigali €52 million for budget deficit*, Kigali 29 April 2005.

⁷⁷ PDN, “Le PDN salue la déclaration de Rome”, Brussels, 2 April 2005.

⁷⁸ PDN, “La position rigide du régime Kagame sur la question du rapatriement des FDLR pourrait compromettre la réconciliation au Rwanda et hypothéquer gravement les chances de paix et de la stabilité dans la région des Grands Lacs”, *Communiqué de Presse*, Brussels, 8 May 2005.

⁷⁹ R-FDLR, “Toute résolution du problème Rwandais passe par le dialogue inter-Rwandais”, *Communiqué de Presse PP NO. 02/MAR./05*, 31 March 2005.

PDN moderates are seeking to co-ordinate with the FDLR. They aim to integrate their projected return with that of the Hutu rebels. In the past, they had tried to push the FDLR towards a political trajectory in *Igihango*, but had been rebuffed by the FDLR leadership. The multi-ethnic nature of the alliance would have given *Igihango* more leverage towards Kigali, to negotiate the combatants' repatriation, than the FDLR on its own. The FDLR has now realised that it needs to reach out to other opposition members in order to strengthen its political cause. The FDLR needs to modify its Hutu outlook, making it multi-ethnic to indicate its candour in fighting the ideology of ethnic hatred, as proclaimed in Rome, and to highlight the fact that the Rwanda conflict is not due to a Hutu-Tutsi rivalry but is of a deep-seated political nature. The FDLR is currently in contact with the European wing of the PDN. Moderate Tutsi, who have unremittingly been committed to a peaceful resolution of the Rwandan impasse, are, therefore, trying to buttress the Rome declaration.

Two tendencies can now be seen on the external political stage – embarking on the military option and transferring the opposition back to Rwanda.

4.1. The Case for War

Following years of exclusion from the Rwandan political landscape, exiled political parties have become more radical. Seeing how the politics of pressure have failed, the military option is gaining ground against the political path among the exiled movements. Allegedly, the aim to repatriate to Rwanda signals the parting of ways between the FDLR/“moderate” PDN wing and the parties remaining in exile. The FDLR has, thus, been “ousted” from the opposition platform as a result of its peace pronouncement.⁸⁰ Political parties are now considering a military incursion into Rwanda to destabilise the regime. The RPF's tactic in 1990, whereby it forced its way into Rwanda, pushing the Habyarimana regime towards a political opening has become a frequent point of reference. Certain countries, not only in the Great Lakes region but also in Europe, appear willing to support armed action against Kigali – rumours that have emboldened militarists.

Rumours that armed forces are being raised to fight Kigali abound. Whispers are circulating that Tutsi military figures present in Uganda are negotiating with the R-FDLR. It is believed that this may have interfered with

⁸⁰ Interview with Jean-Baptiste Mberabahizi.

FOCA willingness to disarm, as the R-FDLR may have kept open the lines of communication with certain combatants. An embellished version maintains that the R-FDLR is negotiating a fusion with Major Rurangwa's RPR, which is said to be present in the Great Lakes region military scene. Consequently, the professed *Armée Nationale* and *Ingabo z'Umwami* would also merge, to form a new group, *Urunana*. The likelihood that the AN exists in Rwanda is, nevertheless, minimal. Armed individuals who are favourable to the R-FDLR cause are possibly found in Rwanda – the Rwandan-DRC border is sufficiently large and porous for people to cross through the Kivus – but it is almost impossible that they have been able to organise into an army, under the vigilant eye of the Rwandan state.

Before breaking away from the *Igihango* alliance to form the new organisation, PDN founding members had frowned upon the FDLR's warmongering attitude. Yet, even a PDN faction appears to be musing on military destabilisation of Rwanda. PDN President Augustin Kamongi is in touch with ex-RPA officers – putative PDN members – in Uganda and is responsible for the organisation of the PDN Africa section. In the light of the unwillingness of the US wing of the PDN to support the FDLR peace declaration, Kamongi's involvement with Rwandan military men seems to be based on ulterior motives. The ADR is also considering the use of armed force. ADR members in Uganda reputedly include Rwandan soldiers, who could possibly join up with other armed groups in the region.

4.2. Transplanting the Opposition to Rwanda

In claiming its right to return to Rwanda, the opposition attempts to gain political ground. Its physical presence in Rwanda in order to engage in opposition politics and to mobilise people in favour of an 'inter-Rwandese dialogue' would be a major asset. In spite of the dangers posed – through the omnipresence of the security forces – and the difficulties in setting up a political party that will be accredited, a multi-ethnic opposition party active in Rwanda would likely enjoy popular support. The opposition has encouraged Rwandans to stand up to the regime from a safe distance. It can only earn the trust of the population and can only claim to represent it if it is in Rwanda.

The FOCA presence in eastern Congo has provided Kigali with the pretext to intervene in the DRC. It has also offered the regime a justification for its domestic restrictions on civil and political liberties. The disarmament, repatriation and reintegration of the FDLR present a way out of the impasse –

the international community may shift its focus from the “negative elements” to the *problems of the Rwandan interior*.

The political diaspora must aim to resolve the political impasse in Rwanda, rather than to continue its pattern of inconsequential politics abroad. Many exiled political actors continue to be primarily concerned with their personal role on the political scene. The physical presence of an opposition *in Rwanda* is imperative for a political opening, though.

5. CONCLUSION

The Rwandan external opposition's effectiveness has been marred by prolonged leadership antagonisms. There have been constant regrouping and realignments. Sectarianism – ethnic and regional – has led to the dissolution of organisations. A radical wave is sweeping over the exiled opposition stage and certain groups are divided along ‘power’/‘moderate’ lines. Power wings are attempting to link up with armed groups in the Great Lakes region to destabilise the regime by an incursion into Rwanda.

At the same time, the FDLR is transforming into a political organisation. Occupying no land in Rwanda, the FDLR is unable to exert pressure on or destabilise the regime. It has possibly acknowledged the futility of continuing an uneven fight against the regime. The FDLR proclaimed an end to hostilities and a desire to repatriate to Rwanda on condition that there were security and a political opening. The international community hailed the FDLR gesture as a breakthrough. Kigali, on the other hand, rebuffed the calls for dialogue, continuing to exploit the «genocidal ideology» discourse in order to eliminate all forms of opposition.

The stakes are high for Kigali and for the FDLR leadership. The Rome peace process has frozen as the FDLR and Kigali are adamant in their respective standpoints. The FDLR presence in the DRC threatens stability in the Great Lakes region and Kigali has been unwilling to resolve this problem. The end of offensive operations and the commitment to steer a political trajectory is crucial for the Congolese transition and for the normalisation of relations between Kigali and Kinshasa. The success of the voluntary disarmament and repatriation of the *abacunguzi* combatants is highly dependent on the involvement of the international community. Yet, rather than pressure Rwanda to open some line of communication with the combatants in order to close the chapter of the Hutu rebellion in eastern

Congo, the World Bank and IMF have given Rwanda a \$1.4 billion debt relief and the European Union has offered it €52 million in budgetary aid.

As a political force, the FDLR poses a threat to the regime, in that it is seen to represent the Hutu community and is, by connotation, numerically strong. Kagame's regime rigidly denies the reality of the Rwandan ethnic composition, repudiating reference to ethnic identities. Any such reference is reprimanded and labelled divisionist. This has served towards the exclusion of otherwise valid interlocutors from the internal political scene and parties that genuinely opposed the RPF-led regime were banned. Nevertheless, the Rwandan deadlock is not a result of ethnic competition. Transferring the opposition to Rwanda could threaten the regime.

Exile politics have proved futile. Instead, if the FDLR is demobilised and repatriated, the attention of the international community may shift from the alleged security threat to the shortcomings of the Rwandan regime. Kigali may find itself in an awkward position in the longer run if the international community begins to perceive it as intransigent. A strong opposition in Rwanda is necessary to ease the way for an eventual 'inter-Rwandese dialogue.' Should eminent political personalities, such as Faustin Twagiramungu and figures coming from the PDN achieve accreditation for political movements in Rwanda, the political landscape would change.

Brussels, May 2005