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## Public Holidays in Post-Independence Rwanda: A Historical Reading of Some Speeches

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## **PUBLIC HOLIDAYS IN POSTINDEPENDENCE RWANDA: A HISTORICAL READING OF SOME SPEECHES**

**By Charles Kabwete Mulinda<sup>1</sup>**

### ***Abstract***

*Since independence, Rwandan governments have made it a culture to commemorate some events considered as important. These include the dates of 28 January in remembrance of the Gitarama proclamation of the Republic and abolition of Monarchy on 28 January 1961; 25 September to commemorate the victory of Party of Movement of Emancipation of Hutu (PARMEHUTU) victory of legislative elections, and 1 July to celebrate the Rwandan independence that took place on 1 July 1962. Other important dates include the 1<sup>st</sup> of January of each year when the Head of State used to address the nation and the 5<sup>th</sup> of July to commemorate the accession to power of President Juvénal Habyarimana on 5 July 1973.*

*This paper seeks to make a number of arguments. First, it attempts to highlight the fact that those dates or events were given an unequal emphasis during the First Republic (1962-1973) and the Second Republic (1973-1994). Secondly, it argues that commemoration was not just about the recalling of past events. It was most importantly about seeking a new interpretation of those past events in the present conjuncture. In this regard, past events were given a new meaning and a new emphasis to justify or support political interests or to project future strategies.*

*Methodologically, this paper does two things. It first assesses the speeches of leaders, especially of President Grégoire Kayibanda and President Juvénal Habyarimana, during those commemorated dates by reporting their overall content. In this regard, it shows how heads of state were key actors in shaping the memory of the nation and acting as custodians*

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*of public history. It also shows how the content of those speeches were a combination of past events and their significance in the present, i.e., at the moment of their presentation.*

**Keywords:** *Rwanda, Public Holidays, Speeches, Grégoire Kayibanda, Juvénal Habyarimana, Public History, Democracy, Development, the Nation.*

## INTRODUCTION

Since independence, a number of days have been proclaimed public holidays. These include the 1<sup>st</sup> January to celebrate the beginning of a new year; 28 January in remembrance of the Gitarama proclamation of the Republic and abolition of Monarchy on 28 January 1961; 1<sup>st</sup> May as the Labour Day; 1<sup>st</sup> July to celebrate the Rwandan Independence that took place on 1 July 1962; the 5<sup>th</sup> of July to commemorate the accession to power of President Juvénal Habyarimana on 5 July 1973 and the creation of the *Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement* (MRND) party on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1975; 25<sup>th</sup> September to commemorate the victory of Party of Movement of Emancipation of Hutu (PARMEHUTU) of legislative elections and referendum on the monarchy system; 26<sup>th</sup> October as Government Holiday; and then 24 November as Justice Holiday. There were also religious holidays.

This paper documents how activities of celebration took place at some of those dates, as well as speeches of heads of states. It also shows how those days developed in time. In this regard, it emphasizes how those public holidays were given an unequal emphasis in different times, that is, during the First Republic (1962-1973) and the Second Republic (1973-1994). It argues that the celebration of holidays gave to incumbent leaders two opportunities: first to recall what happened at those dates, by way of commemoration, and second to convey the crucial message that was important for legitimizing their power in present time.

Rwanda is known to be one of African countries to be endowed with a rich historiography. (D'Hertefelt and de Lame 1987) But public history is not yet developed, so works analyzing public discourses in the historical domains remain rare. Moreover, at this crucial time when Rwanda is commemorating her 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence, there is need for revisiting how that event was celebrated in the past. Again, there is the belief that the previous Kayibanda and Habyarimana regimes were different. This is true in part, but their continuities have not yet been fully explored. There is need to fill this gap.

Methodologically, this paper does two things. It first assesses the speeches of leaders, especially of President Grégoire Kayibanda and President Juvénal Habyarimana, during those commemorated dates by reporting their overall content. In this regard, it shows how heads of state were key actors in shaping the memory of the nation and in acting as custodians of public history. It also shows how the content of those speeches were a combination of past events and their significance in the present, i.e., at the moment of their presentation.

It builds from Foucault's analysis of discourse:

“I do not question discourses about their silently intended meanings, but about the fact and the conditions of their manifest appearance; not about the contents which they may conceal, but about the transformations which they have effected; not about the sense preserved within them like a perpetual origin, but about the field where they coexist, reside and disappear. It is a question of analysis of the discourses in the dimension of their exteriority.” (Foucault 1991: 60)

Therefore, it looks at speeches as words, but also as deeds, policy. It posits that the speeches are pronounced at particular events, i.e., independence days and other publicly commemorated holidays, but that those events have a resonance even after. Indeed, an event is at the same time immediate and long lasting. (Braudel 1980)

My approach in the reading of these speeches is essentially interpretive and qualitative. While I put in historical context statements of leaders, I also look at continuities but also discontinuities in the evolution of choices of meanings and ideas of leaders in different times and places. I again try to explain the linkage between ideas and policies pursued by those leaders. By doing so, I show what those holidays meant for those leaders, and how they wanted to influence their audiences, both national and international. As the reader will notice, I selected certain holidays and ignored others. My criteria were the evolution of themes on the one hand, and the target of key dates of celebration such as the fifth, tenth or twentieth anniversaries, on the other hand.

## **1. SPEECHES DURING THE KAYIBANDA REGIME (1962-1973)**

### **1.1. On Independence Day**

1 July 1962, as expected, was a great day in Rwanda. It was the celebration of the independence of Rwanda, together with Burundi, an independence granted by the prevailing colonial power, Belgium. At that day, festivities were definitely pompous, ranging from dances, parades to speeches. (For more details about festivities, see Mugesera 2012, pp. 7-21. For another analysis of this speech, see Nkaka 2012, pp. 103-105) This holiday was full of hopes, expectations and dreams about how the future of the country and its citizens was going to look like. It was a day when ruptures with the hard past of colonial rule were believed to happen as soon as possible. Dreams were as much about the improvement of material conditions as well the acquisition of more fundamental rights. Indeed, Rwanda shared these dreams with other African countries so far 'independent'. The speech of President Grégoire Kayibanda heralds that hope for a better future in clear terms:

“This date of 1<sup>st</sup> July 1962 will remain unforgettable in the Annals of the Republic of Rwanda, not just because of the presence of so many high profile personalities here, but above all because of the crucial character of it for the future of our country. Indeed, this 1st July happens to be the very first day of an Independent Rwanda. From today onwards Rwanda is independent, it is free; it is responsible for its decisions at internal and external levels: it is responsible of its social, economic, and political progress.” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 18-24)

He went on to explain the process that led to that independence:

“...without attempting to reach the mists of time in order to examine the history of Rwanda, up to what has prepared this happy event, we need to stress the fall of feudality through the grant of internal autonomy to democratic Institutions established by the will of the People, up to the decision of the General Assembly of the United Nations that decided the termination of the Trusteeship Accord on our country.” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 18-24)

Feudality, or feudo-monarchy was a qualifier to mean the Tutsi or the previous monarchy system. (Nkusi 2010) Then followed a word of thanks to Belgium for her activity in Rwanda and also homage to Germany. This homage to colonial power in a speech at Independence Day was a rupture from for instance the speech of Prime Minister Lumumba in Congo on 30 June 1960. Most importantly, gratitude is expressed to Colonel Guy Logiest who was Military

Resident and then Civil Special Resident of Rwanda from November 1959 up to the time of independence and who had helped the Kayibanda party, PARMEHUTU (*Parti du Mouvement de l'Emancipation des Hutu*) to gain power. Then the President added: "I can say this unequivocally : the friendship that our people will keep for Belgium will be, in its most part the result of the humane action of Colonel Logiest who will remain welcomed amongst us." (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 18-24) It is worth noting that Colonel Guy Logiest stayed in Rwanda as Ambassador up to 1963. He remained a friend of Rwanda. Moreover, he attended the tenth anniversary of the independence of Rwanda in 1972. In 1982, he came back to Rwanda again to attend the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence of Rwanda together with the King of Belgium. He was decorated with a medal of the Cross of the High Officer together with Jean-Paul Harroy who was vice-governor general and then general resident of Ruanda-Urundi. (Logiest 1988, pp. 215)

His mention of Belgium in the speech is highly convivial and diplomatic: he says that despite some "mistakes", the balance of Belgian colonial rule in Rwanda was "positive". Then he thanks the religious organizations' "civilizing influence", but also the United Nations. He also thanks the leaders of his party *Mouvement Démocratique Républicain* Parmehutu for the efforts to negotiate that independence.

The remainder of the speech is about security, economic plans and external cooperation for the future. Concerning security, he points out that:

"Now, public order has been established throughout the Country, peace has come after the storm of the Revolution and the establishment of a democratic Government, those who had been afraid or who were misled by retarded politicians, and who have fled the country have returned home or are returning from their adventure: the People is working, all citizens, ordinary and great, see the future with optimism." (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 18-24)

This is all he said concerning the tensed climate of that moment caused by the violence of the "revolution", and he did not emphasize that much the exile of hundreds of thousands of Tutsi and other monarchists, the death of some hundreds of people, and the destruction of property.

On cooperation, he promised that Rwanda would continue to be friend to Belgium, as an important partner for development, and to several other partners. Indeed, development was a

key word for most African countries since the early 1950s and most importantly at independence.

This independence speech was more about the present and the future. The play of the past was not emphasized that much. It was about celebration and not yet about commemoration.

In 1966, some four years after independence, the key word at the commemoration of the Independence Day was now the Nation: “We should all consider the National Festivity as a great occasion in our civic life. It is not only made of spare time, it is most importantly a unique occasion of the year, when every citizen is invited to think intentionally about the Nation, about his/her responsibility for the Nation, ...” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 179-185)

At that national holiday of 1st July 1966, the President asked each Rwandan to meditate about his/her contribution in “democratic development at national level” and that “That National festivity should be the occasion for responsible Rwandans to remember how to deal seriously with economic, budgetary and monetary issues and remind all other partners with Rwanda how the needs of the Nation are the priority.” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 179-185) He vehemently criticized what he called subversion, or neocolonialist behaviour of certain Rwandans and foreigners. He insisted again on strategies for economic and financial stability and development.

Indeed, since independence, the discourse – and the target – of economic development became overemphasized by African countries. This stems from the fact that after becoming – or believing to being – independent, african countries started to compare themselves to other countries economically more powerful. That is when they realized to what extent they were by far less materially equipped. That is why african leaders, military and civilian alike, became obsessed about economic development and most importantly about infrastructure building.

At the commemoration of the Independence Day in 1967, the key word was now Democracy and well-being:

“As everyone knows, since 1st July 1962, we have worked hard to improve our Regime. This regime, we want it more authentically democratic, that means that it should be based on the will and expression of the People, and should be a means for all

citizens and in particular the weak ones to ameliorate their living conditions.” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 219-223)

Then the President went on to remind key activities and achievements of his regime since Independence. These include: the establishment of the programmes of the party in power, the voting of laws and regulations at legislative level, the setting up of institutions in charge of progress, external relations and building of infrastructure. Concerning security, he mentioned the action of the government in the fight of what he called terrorism stemming from Rwandans who were attacking the country. He called them “the poor fellow outdated”. These are in fact the Inyenzi rebels attacks from 1961 up to 1966, who were refugees since 1959 and who were trying to come back to Rwanda. (Mugesera 2004, pp. 133-204) This speech emphasized the past achievements, but also the needs of present.

His assessment of his regime is that it was evolving well towards democracy. This is related to the fact that he had been organizing elections at commune, legislative and presidential levels since 1962. He comes back to a critique of former opponents, those that he defeated at the time of independence, i.e., the UNAR and RADER members, Tutsi and other monarchists. He says that their struggle is about to bring back the “feudo-colonialist servitude”. He also criticizes his present opponents, those who shared power with him but got opposed to his policy of regionalism: ministers who allegedly did not work enough for the welfare of people, those who started to become more and more ‘bourgeois’ thanks to financial benefits. This is actually the time when some divisions started to occur within the party since 1965, when this party had become a single party. After fighting other parties, now party leaders went also in competition for power and material benefits among themselves. So whenever new opponents were being excluded, they were punished allegedly for behaving like old ‘feudo-colonialists’ who were defeated at the time of independence. (See also Nkusi 2010, p. 71 and Reyntjens 1985, pp. 474-495) Past was used as an ideology to discredit them.

In the 1968 commemoration of Independence Holiday, we see the emphasis of the past and the present but also of ‘development’ as a legitimizing ideology: “The 1st July has come again, it is the commemoration of our National Independence. You must celebrate it in order to remember the past, to rejoice about the present and to think about and prepare the future of the Republic.” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 245-251) Then he indicated that since 1960, the country’s situation was improving:



“Walk around Kigali without preconceived and selfish ideas and go up to the countryside: a slow but real advancement is tangible: better housing, more children of the people in school, more people preoccupied by community progress, more awareness about savings, more spontaneous social activities, and more individual initiatives, more competent cadres, imbued with a democratic culture, things that show that the present year is better than the previous one, and that upcoming years will be better than the present.” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 245-251)

Then he goes on to mention in detail economic policies that have achieved progress in the past years. To mention again the past, he stresses the following: “The Rwandan People has freed itself from the servitudes of feudality that has been defeated, and of the colonialism that went away...” Concerning the present situation, he observes that: “The People now establish laws and the Administration of the Country, the education system is being democratized at an interesting pace, activities of basic education are multiplying and consolidating; this is a real and concrete emancipation that should be applauded by all of you, since you all had participated to its achievement.” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 245-251) A bit far, he adds: “The feudal and the colonial that must be defeated today is Poverty, Ignorance...” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 245-251) The past reminded at this date is his victory over the ‘feudal’ and the ‘colonial’. But also all bad things are equated to those two categories.

At the seventh commemoration of Independence Day in 1969, the President developed three points: First, he stressed how the country has been registering progress in all domains. This according to him led some leaders to become more and more bourgeois. On this, he repeats the point of his speech of some previous years. Secondly, he reminded the audience about the National Plan for Economic and Social Development, and urged everyone about his/her contribution to make this work in future. At the same time, he criticized the so-called ‘neocolonialists’ who were not contributing to its success. These are actually his opponents within the party. The third point is about the condemnation of any sort of violence coming from ‘terrorists’ called ‘former feudalist’. He also reminds the population that the elections will take place in that year of 1969. (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 267-268) This speech, which was brief, is about the attack toward his past and present opponents.

## 1.2. On 1 January (Happy New Year)

Unlike Independence holidays, 1<sup>st</sup> January holidays were not public holidays. They were celebrated like private sphere festivities. Although the Government team would invite the Diplomatic community for a small gathering, no other public celebrations would follow. What was public about this day was its proclamation as a holiday, and a speech delivered by the President of the Republic on the eve of it, that is, on 31 December. But, as we shall see, during the First Republic and during the Second Republic, the content of the presidential speeches was pretty much close to the other public holiday speeches.

In 1966, for example, the address of the President of the Republic was about strengthening the objectives of the Republic, but also the effort to reach more democracy: “My word today will be an invitation to pursue the objectives of the Republic.” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 200-203) Then he goes on to instill more optimism in the evaluation of what went positive and negative. Moreover, he advocates for the democratization of ‘national life’, of the economy and of knowledge acquisition. He insists that the education system must be ‘democratized’, which meant for him to enroll more and more Hutu children. In fact, in that year, the President had nationalized schools previously managed by the Roman Catholic Church. (République Rwandaise 1986, pp. 14 and 20; Paternostre de la Mairie 1972, pp. 344-345) This call was an emphasis of his new policy. To remember the past context that brought democracy he says the following: “Democracy has been established against all sorts of feudalities that had occurred in the years before and we still remember the unrest immortalized by November 59.” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 200-203) According to his appraisal, since independence, Rwandans had been working hard to improve their lives materially.

On the eve of 1968 again, President Kayibanda addressed his best wishes to the Rwandan population and the Diplomatic mission. He emphasized the achievements of the year 1967 such as the Development Plan, and the performance of Rwandan artists at the international exhibition of Montreal. He mentioned a case of mercenaries chased from Congo to Rwanda. They were in fact refugees. He called them mercenaries, and again ‘bands of terrorists’. He concluded on a note about security: “The issue of mercenaries will come back again in next few weeks but it will not stop the good evolution of positive institutions towards the development of the country.” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 232a-232d) On the eve of 1969, the

President urged leaders not to embark in “sterile and useless conflicts” but to work hard. Indeed there were so many conflicts within the party PARMEHUTU. (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 262-263)

### **1.3. On 28 January: celebration of democracy**

28<sup>th</sup> January 1961 refers to the coup d'état of Gitarama by leaders of PARMEHUTU and APROSOMA (*Association pour la Promotion Sociale de la Masse*) under the material help of Colonel Guy Logiest, Resident of Rwanda. At that date, all newly elected councilors and burgomasters (around 3,000 people) met and then elected the leaders of the government and also leaders of the new parliament. A mass of people, around 25,000, had gathered there. But the United Nations never recognized the institutions from that coup. (For details about that day, see Harroy 1984, pp. 411-422; Logiest 1988, pp. 228-231) That date was retained and given the new meaning of a holiday of democracy because it is a day when those parties that called themselves “democratic” attempted to reach power.

In 1967, the President made the following speech, which appears as an emphasis of the importance of commemorating the 28 January day:

“This 28 January that has made us meet at this historical place, is an occasion to remind you the big event. Some naïve people have attempted to forget it, but the whole Rwandan people, especially those of this generation, will not forget it...I am going to remind you quickly the unforgettable souvenir of this date which is the 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the feudal regime in Rwanda and the establishment of Democracy in the country of a thousand hills.” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 204a-204c)

Then he goes on to explain what he meant by democracy, and what meaning the MDR PARMEHUTU ascribed to democracy, and what the party required to the population. He pursues with an advice to Rwandans: that they should refute all sorts of servitudes such as corruption, bourgeois tendencies, intrigues; and embark on efforts of development. There is a play here between past and present and future: what to remember and what to do for a better life. The meaning of Gitarama, the place of meeting is also highly symbolized: because that is the place where they met in 1961, they continued to celebrate it at Gitarama.

In 1968, the emphasis of the space was again done:

“The crucial date of 28 January reminds us and all future generations the establishment of Democracy in Rwanda. [...] This place is not a small one among the places of the Republic: it is here that the Republic was born, it is also here that the Democratic Regime took shape. [...] The situation of the 28 January 1961 and of the previous years obliged us to do what we did in the National Congress that met at this place: We publicly rejected the political and socio-economic system of feudal monarchy and replaced it with a democratic and republican regime for the Rwandan Nation, for Rwandan people who always wanted a democratic Regime.” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 239-244)

This emphasis of a democratic regime is very important here, because from 1965, the country was ruled under a single party, PARMEHUTU. So the president was trying to legitimize his system through resorting to past deeds, i.e., what he did in 1961. Then he goes on to explain what democracy meant to him and his regime: “Democracy for us, is the force of the People : By that we mean better living conditions for the mass of the People, conditions that stem from the labour of each and all, labour executed through conscious and disciplined freedom, not through... beatings.” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 239-244) He stresses that for democracy to strengthen, people must benefit from the services delivered by political administration, public security, national education, information dissemination, the legislative body, even international relations. He comes back to the past and reminds that the remains of the ‘feudo-capitalist’ spirit must be extirpated from the behaviours of certain leaders. Those remains are: intrigues, calumny, distrust, denigration. Then he dwells on values of democracy, values that Rwandans should adopt.

In 1969, the President mentioned again the importance the ‘memorable’ place where the 28 January 1961 took place. And then he linked the past to the present: “Since then, the democratic regime is consolidating, thanks to a number of vehicles: a national party, a government, a legislative assembly... all geared to help the country become an authentic democratic regime in all sectors of the life of the citizen.” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, p. 265) This name “national party” for PARMEHUTU started in 1966. (Reyntjens 1985, p. 473) In most other African countries, they used the term “single party”. The remainder of the speech is again about the present, where the President observed that certain leaders were being corrupted, were tired and were no longer delivering to the people and that the party has sanctioned them. Those sanctions were, according to the President, “a call to order, an invitation to come back to the line of those who fight for...democracy...” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, p. 265) In fact, since 1965, the President used to vilify his party opponents in public holiday speeches. He also used to reinterpret the past against his opponents.

In 1970, two holidays were commemorated on the same day of 28 January: the celebration of Democracy, and the tenth anniversary of the PARMEHUTU party. As a reminder about the past, he observed that some people who benefited from the previous “feudal” regime did not like the name PARMEHUTU for his party, because according to him “such a name affirms the rights of the people.” (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 272-277) Indeed, the Kayibanda regime considered the Hutu as the true “people” of Rwanda, Tutsi being like foreigners in Rwanda. (Nkusi 2010, p. 54)

The parade that took place at that day is also considered as the most telling expression of the action of the party in ten years and as a rupture vis-à-vis the monarchical regime. This is a celebration of two holidays, but the President insists on what the party did and says that the party will punish those who engage in sabotage. He insists on democracy, on development, and most importantly on the present.

In this speech and the previous, the President recreates the ambiance of 1959-62: the most important division is within PARMEHUTU. Moreover, the democracy he is talking about at this time (1970) has become an empty word. He had eliminated other parties by various means: election or violence. By 1965 he was ruling a single party that he called the national party. Democracy had become an ideology as in many other African countries. (Kabwete Mulinda 1997)

#### **1.4. On 25 September 1961 and after, commemoration of the Legislative Assembly**

In a speech delivered on 25 September 1967 at the commemoration of the anniversary of the Legislative Assembly, the President insisted on service delivery to the population, and especially to the lower classes. At the same time, he announced the completion of the Development Plan of Rwanda. (Kayibanda 1960-1973, pp. 223a-223b)

For the celebration of almost each of the above holidays, past and present are at play. The past is about the very meaning, significance and importance of that day for Rwandans and leaders, the present is about the occasion of the existing power to send a message that is important in

present. The past event is instrumentalized for present benefits. Whether the leaders get able to reach their objective of convincing people is another issue. But they try to do that.

## 2. SPEECHES DURING THE HABYARIMANA REGIME

### 2.1. On Independence Days

The first anniversary to be celebrated by Habyarimana as President of the Republic was the one of 1 July 1974, since he had accessed to power on 5 July 1973. He took this occasion to remind what this independence meant to Rwanda. His focus is on the freedom recovered: “At this pleasant day of 1 July we are gathered in order to celebrate with joy the 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence of our country. Twelve years have elapsed since Rwanda got its entire freedom through national and international sovereignty. [...] With its revolution of 1959 ending, RWANDA rejected for good all forms of domination and exploitation of a segment of people by another.” (Présidence de la République 1981, pp. 97-100) Then he goes on to remind that the Kayibanda regime worked for the welfare of Rwandans during the first years, but that towards the end, it became more divisive and violent. That justified his choice of coup d'état of 5 July 1973. His coup is also legitimized by the guarantee of liberties to Rwandans: “By taking power on 5<sup>th</sup> July, the High Command of the Rwandan Army rescued the territorial integrity and restored the freedom of citizens. Thus, it restored the goodness of our revolution and of our national independence.” (Présidence de la République 1981, pp. 97-100) On that note, he considers his coup to be the continuation of the ‘revolution’ and the independence. Past and present are somewhat linked, the former to legitimize the latter.

He goes on to explain that independence for him means development, action, work, and to highlight this message, he declared the year 1974 to be “the year of promotion of agriculture”. It was also in 1974 that he instituted the communal manual labour “*Umuganda*”. Independence means and is reached through work: “The gains of that independence must be kept and made productive. That will materialize through your wisdom, discipline and work.” (Présidence de la République 1981, pp. 97-100)

Again 1982, Rwanda commemorated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence. It was a grandiose celebration, from the testimonies of those who attended it. Indeed, many Heads of States and high profile personalities had come to Rwanda for that special event. The speech of the

President emphasized the past enough: there is the mention of the “Hutu Manifesto” of 24<sup>th</sup> March 1957, the “popular and social revolution of 1959” that freed “popular masses” from “feudal power” that created against them “injustices”, “humiliations,...” And then how the “social revolution” brought “democracy” and then “independence”, independence that ended some “400 years of Middle Age feudality...”

Then he reminds the guérilleros *Inyenzi* who attacked the country from 1962 to 1967 and what the Rwandan army did to restore security, how he took power on 5 July 1973 to solve problems of injustices and regional monopolisms and brought what he called “moral revolution”, and “*démocratie responsable*”. By democracy, he meant mainly the electoral process that he undertook since 1978. He mentioned of course the achievements of his government in infrastructure, in agriculture, in housing, child and women rights, education, transport, energy, industry, trade, tourism, diplomacy, etc. He came back to the refugee issue, since in that year Rwandan refugees from Uganda were chased away from that asylum country back to the border of Rwanda. It was a problem of the past which came back in the present. He clarified the position of his government on the refugee issue and suggested that it was a humanitarian and not a political issue. (Habyarimana 1983 (1982), pp. 172-211) During this commemoration, the President decorated several people that are believed to have contributed to the independence of Rwanda or to its development. Two of them and who got one of the biggest medals are Jean-Paul Harroy who was Vice-Gouverneur General of Ruanda-Urundi from 1955 to 1962, and Colonel Guy Logiest who was Resident of Rwanda. They got the medals of “High Officer”. (For another reading of this speech, see Nkaka 2012, pp. 119-121)

## **2.2. On 5 July: celebration of the Second Regime**

On 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1973 when Habyarimana together with other high command army officers took power, his speech was more about the divisive character of the Kayibanda regime and their need to save Rwanda from territorial disintegration. Of all the divisions that were witnessed then, these officers insisted more on regional divisions. They also advocated for national unity starting from the army up to workers and then the entire population. (Présidence de la République 1981, pp. 15-19)

On 5th of July 1974, President Habyarimana reminded again the « heroic » act of the army that allegedly saved the country: “The date of 5 July is henceforth written in golden characters in the annals of the Republic of Rwanda. It is day of Peace, Unity and National Harmony.” (Présidence de la République 1981, pp. 101-113) He reminded in few words the content of his speech of 1 august 1973 in which he articulated his programme and the fact that he called the year 1974 “the year of agriculture”. Then he gave the appraisal of his achievements in all domains: administrative, economic, health, education, army, interior and foreign affairs. Again that day of 5 July 1974, he called it a day of reconciliation, so he decided to lower the penalties of political prisoners of the previous regime.

On 5 July 1975, the President launched the new single party: MRND (Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement). From then on, the date of 5 July symbolized both the accession of Habyarimana to power, but also the creation of MRND. From then on, Habyarimana was answering through following titles: Major General Juvenal Habyarimana, President of the Republic of Rwanda and President-Founder of MRND”. At that day, he did not make a long speech as usual; he just referred Rwandans to the Manifesto of that party. (Présidence de la République 1975, p. 90)

The date of 5 July then started to be more emphasized than any other public day. It used to combine both the celebration of Independence Day and the celebration of Habyarimana regime and party anniversaries.

For example, on 5 July 1978, those triple anniversaries were celebrated together. “The hope that we have for future stems from these references that show the merit of our People who have struggled for freedom and dignity, and its will and courage for life.” He mentioned again the “Revolution of 1959”, the “Proclamation of Independence”, two events that have ended “feudality” and “colonialism”, systems that had “humiliated” and “bruised” Rwandans. From then on, Rwandans have been characterized by “freedom” and “responsibility”. For him, “democracy” and “republic” are legacies of 1959 “revolution”. But he hastens to criticize how the First Republic managed them through nepotism, intrigues, cupidity of leaders. Then he reminds how the army under his command saved the country from that misbehavior. Here he presents himself as the “messiah”. On the issue of the content of the history of Rwanda, he says: “Our history must cease to be defined solely from the standpoint of feudal dynasties”. And then for culture, he observes: “Culture cannot be the domain of the elite, it is



fundamentally the domain of the people, who are also its source.” Interestingly, he puts “*animation*” i.e., the praise songs and dances for the president, in the category of such popular culture for development, and he urges leaders to intensify it in schools, in military camps, in companies and other institutions. (Présidence de la République 1978, pp. 96-133. See also Nkaka 2012, pp. 118-119) This is the time when several African leaders were building a personality cult for themselves. (See Jackson and Rosberg 1982) Habyarimana did it also through “*animation*”.

In 1980 again, the commemoration of the three anniversaries was combined and celebrated on 5 July. This entails that 5 July was being given more emphasis than the Independence Day. But the President warned against such a belief, because he noted that the combination of the three celebrations on 5 July was due to ‘economic’ reasons, in order to reduce expenses of festivities. But one can wonder why the three dates were not for instance celebrated on 1 July, which is the Independence Day. The speech of that day emphasized again ideals of freedom, and progress, but also the “revolution” of 1959:

“Militants of the MRND, the date of 5 July has become, for all Rwandans, the formal occasion for festivity and rejoicing, as we commemorate the three major events of our recent history, that is, the National Independence on 1 July 1962, the advent of the Second Republic on 5 July 1973 and the creation of MRND on 5 July 1975, those are deeds that constitute the perpetuation of our people’s Revolution since November 1959. In celebrating them on that day, the Rwandan People recognizes the perseverance and the continuity of their ideal of freedom and progress that inspired the great Revolution of 1959 which is the foundation of the modern history of our country...” (Habyarimana 1980, pp. 21-36)

He further mentions another word that looks like freedom, that is, “pride of each Rwandan”, following independence. He reminded that the MRND party was the only party allowed to operate politically and that included de facto each and every Rwandan in order to “unite” Rwandans. He also mentioned the case of leaders who had been jailed following an accusation against them about an attempted coup against his regime. These include Kanyarengwe and Lizinde who were among his high command Officers. Then he went on to enumerate the achievements of his regime in the five years that the party had lasted. These include what he called the democratization of institutions, that is, the presidential elections that occurred in past, and the plans to have a service delivery system that works well in all domains of public administration, in education, in management of parastatals, the increase of economic production, the fight against rural exodus, etc.

In 1983, the three events were again commemorated together on 5 July. It was a commemoration of the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Independence, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the advent of the Second Republic, and the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the MRND party. The President reminded as usual the “revolution” of 1959 where he mentioned the role of former President Kayibanda in positive terms: “This is the time to remind the role played by the late Grégoire Kayibanda. Because of his numerous merits, the Rwandan people has put away all blames done on him afterwards.” (Présidence du MRND 1983, pp. 200-242) This means that President Habyarimana had reconciled with the dead. Then he reminds about independence and then the first months of 1973 when unrest, hatred, division and intrigues occurred. Then what his regime did in order to bring about peace, that is, how the army took power. Then the discourse – programme of 1 August 1983 content. Then how he instituted *Umuganda* communal work in 1974. Then, to come back to the past and the present, he reminds that his regime had banished the remains of ‘feudality’ such as the ‘spirit of cast, of courting, and intrigues’ which constituted an obstacle to ‘national development’. He adds that certain individuals among leadership wanted to bring it back, so the justice apparatus punished them accordingly. He is talking about the case of Kanyarengwe and others who were jailed since 1980. He comes back to the steps of democracy so far reached, he talks about elections: the presidential election of December 1978, the election of the Legislative Assembly in December 1981 and other elections at party level. Concerning economic achievements, he reminds the economic themes of each year: 1974 was the year of agriculture production, 1975 the year of increase of production, 1977 the year of improvement of housing, 1978 the year promotion of animal production, 1979 reform of education system, 1980 conservation of soil, 1981 good management of water resources, 1982 the year to fight against erosion, and 1983 the year of reforestation. Then he reminds the key role of the army in creating and maintaining the Second Republic existence and stability. But also the recognition of the role of Rwandan woman in development of Rwanda, the youth and especially the education of the youth. Then reforms and achievements in the education sector, but also challenges. He also mentions the need to reach food self-sufficiency and to balance the demographic increase vis-à-vis economic production, and other economic activities. He ended with an idea that every Rwandan should be proud of the achievements of the ten years since 1983. This is one of the longest speeches of President Habyarimana. He had the habit of making such long speeches. This was almost a fashion then.

In 1985, as the MRND party was having its tenth anniversary, the festivities were again combined with the Independence commemoration and the advent of the Second Republic. The President said that the celebration was made with some “simplicity”, perhaps because that year coincided with the beginning of the economic crisis in the whole continent. He reminded how the country was disintegrating at the beginning of 1973 and how the army saved it. He also made an appraisal of what has been done so far: unity and peace building by MRND, several elections held so far, message to youth, justice and rule of law, economic policies, food and demography, socio-ecological domain, and mobilization of active population through cultural performance. This is where he took the occasion to speak about the *Animation*, but also about *Umuganda*. (ORINFOR 1985, pp. 24-63)

In 1989, the three anniversaries were again celebrated in a combined manner. The key word in the long speech of the President was ‘coherence’ in whatever the Second Republic claimed to have achieved in the past and the plan to achieve in future concerning peace and development. Everything was to be done by respecting ‘coherence’ and behaving in a ‘coherent’ manner. (ORINFOR 1989, pp. 190-203)

### **2.3. Holidays of 1 January**

In general, on the New Year Holiday, the President conveys his best wishes to the Diplomatic Community as well as to Rwandans. The message to Diplomats was in general short, whereas the one to Rwandans was long. These speeches were delivered on 31 December of the ending year. The holiday of 1 January was important both for President Kayibanda and President Habyarimana, but Habyarimana seems to have made a better use of that holiday since he took the opportunity to announce the yearly motto for the country for the upcoming year.

For example, he proclaimed that the year 1975 should be dedicated to the “increase of production.” (Présidence de la République 1981, pp. 139-144) For 1976, he said that it was going to be the “year of the Movement”, i.e. the single party. (Présidence de la République 1975, pp. 162-166)

On the eve of 1978, the President conveyed his best wishes to Rwandans. At the same time, he took the opportunity to remind the importance of 5 July 1973, the date when he took power. He proclaimed 1978 as the year of “animal production.” This became the occasion to

remind past considerations of livestock in Rwanda. He reminded the bigger place attached to the cow before 1959, how it constituted “an instrument of political domination of a minority”. “Livestock today must not mean constraint and exploitation.” (Présidence de la République 1978, pp. 9-17) He goes on to explain that there should not be a conflict between the small and the big livestock, or between agriculture and livestock. We see here a play between past, present and future.

On the eve of 1981, the President chose to speak again about the alleged insurrection of certain high command officers in April 1980. Then he enumerated political, economic and social achievements of the government so far. (Habyarimana 1980, pp. 167-178) On the eve of 1983, the President conveyed his best wishes to the Diplomatic Community and to Rwandans and other inhabitants of Rwanda. He again noted what had been achieved during the year 1982 in the activities of fighting soil erosion, increase of food production, rural development, and development projects. But he also mentioned some of the challenges Rwanda faced: the imbalance between economic production and population size; landlockedness of Rwanda; less mineral and less energy production, less resources for Rwandans and Rwanda. Then he proclaimed the year 1983 as the “year of reforestation”. He finally mentioned the case of Rwandan refugees who were chased from Uganda and who were located at the Rwandan border. He just lamented the fact that he had not yet found a solution to it. (Habyarimana 1983, pp. 615-622)

On the eve of 1984, the President reminded to Rwandans the key political activities of the year 1983 such as the fourth ordinary congress of MRND, but also the tenth anniversary of the Second Republic and eight years of the existence of the MRND single party. He reminded the necessity to increase both intellectual and manual work. He also baptized the year 1984 as the “year of food production.” (Présidence du MRND 1983, pp. 300-305)

In his speech of the end of 1985 and beginning of 1986, the President repeated the achievements of the speech of 5 July 1985. He describes his regime as “the living reality of our young democracy”. In fact, Rwanda was a democratic country in the view of the Habyarimana regime. This is interesting to see how African leaders since independence were practicing authoritarianism, were organizing simulacra of elections to legitimize themselves, and were calling this democracy. Then he conveys the best wishes for the year 1986 to all

Rwandans and to the Diplomatic mission representatives. He baptizes the year 1986 as the “year of intensification of agriculture.” (ORINFOR 1985, pp. 215-222)

On the eve of 1989, the President recognized that the country had been undergoing difficulties in the economy. He mentioned certain activities that he considered as important: the arrival of Burundi refugees and the international assistance to them, but also elections held in 1988. He concluded that he was still popular. He thanked Rwandans for having elected him again for a new term. Then he proclaimed the year 1989 “the year of rural auto- organization.” (ORINFOR 1989, pp. 252-263)

#### **2.4. On 25 SEPTEMBER 1992**

This holiday commemorating the legislative elections and referendum (*Kamarampaka*) on the Monarchy of 25 September 1961 was not too much valorized in the Habyarimana regime the way it was during the Kayibanda time. But in 1992, it was captured in order to be given significance in the present: to link the RPF liberation war of 1990-1992 to the ‘revolution’ of 1959 or rejection of Monarchy of 1961.

The speech of President Habyarimana is unequivocal:

“Rwandans Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish you a nice holiday of KAMARAMPAKA. Referendum-KAMARAMPAKA that we commemorate today in these hard times, these hard times look like what preceded Kamarampaka in 1961. At that time, those who stuck to the Monarchy and feudality rule, refused to change their mind, they refused to recognize that after the Revolution of 1959 and the shift of power of 28 January 1961, the monarchy system has been defeated and replaced by a Republican system, and a democratic system. [...] It was therefore necessary that the elections be organized, at the unforgettable date of 25 September 1961, now 31 years have elapsed. [...] Dear Rwandans, the celebration we are having at this holiday of Kamarampaka coincides with the time when Rwanda is undergoing a war that we are waging again, against those who want to access to power by other means than elections... At this day we are celebrating, there are those who intend to strangle that democracy we got since that Referendum-Kamarampaka.” (Munyazesa 1992, pp. 1-7)

Here President Habyarimana is linking 1961 with 1992, also claiming that democracy has always prevailed since that time and that it is being threatened now in 1992. As if democracy existed since 1961 up to 1992, that is, in present time.

“This holiday happens again a year after Rwanda started the experience of Multiparty system, now we have 16 parties, five of which have been able to share power in a multiparty government, together with the President of the Republic. In addition, dear Rwandans, I would like to remind you that in 1961, Rwanda also had a multiparty system. Those that were well known are four: PARMEHUTU, UNAR, APROSOMA and RADER. [...] In any case, the majority population (Rubanda Nyamwinshi) of Rwanda settled the debate. [...] Dear Rwandans, this holiday occurs again when we are about to reach two years in war, a war that has been caused by Inkotanyi coming from Uganda, a war that has scattered children of Rwanda and especially those living near the border of Rwanda and Uganda, it has also threatened the economy of our country, it has killed our people, and has seriously destabilized the peace we used to enjoy.” (Munyazesa 1992, pp. 1-7)

Then he went on to criticize RPF Inkotanyi of not respecting the clauses of the Arusha peace talks and to urge other opposition political parties to not collaborate with the RPF, because that would look like a betrayal of the Republican system.

## CONCLUSION

The speeches in this paper showed that public holidays were like a time and space of celebration, commemoration but also ‘lecture’: the lecture about the political past, the Nation, and the appraisal of policies and achievements of the regime. Rwandan citizens were given a break in order to rejoice by way of festivities, but also to pay attention to what leaders wanted them to hear, to believe and to do.

That is why the contents of presidential speeches were about the use of the past event being celebrated or commemorated in order to legitimize the existing power, in order to discredit the present opponents of the regime and to instill the population to more participation in present and future policies of the government. One would expect this moment of holiday to be a mere occasion of festivity, but we saw that it was more than that. Part of the reason is that public holidays occupied a space and time of the ‘regime’; therefore they had to serve to that purpose.

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