

Jean Pierre Chrétien: CNRS, co-author of Les Medias du Genocide

Frank Chalk: Next I have the honor of presenting the historian, Jean-Pierre Chrétien.

Jean Pierre Chrétien: So good morning. So you can see therefore how difficult it is in 10 minutes to present something that is very important, which is the content of propaganda, which lead to genocide based on texts, on specific realities. Recently the French journalist, Jean Atsfelt(?) in Machete published the evidence of a number of killers, if you will, in genocide, a number of people responsible for genocide. He said killing is very discouraging. If you have yourself to take the decision to do so, but if you have to obey certain orders, the orders of the authorities, if you were sufficiently sensitized, then you feel nevertheless somewhat comforted. You don't worry about it quite so much. We, in fact, were sensitized to this by radio, and by the advice that we received. So this psychology of killers, who are taking part in massacres can be clearly seen, not in an ethnological, ethno-cultural context, but rather in the actual methodology of modern propaganda. And this is very well seen through a manual from a French psychologist, Roger Muchielli entitled "Psychology of the Publicity and Propaganda". It's a handbook for psychologists and for facilitators, etc. And this was published in the beginning of the 70s, and with the all the other works of the specialists, can be found at the University Library of Butare. Alison Des Forges, who is here also with us this morning found a reference established by an intellectual from Butare, which clearly shows the way in which such propaganda can be used in order to promote this ideology, which would lead to genocide. I've referred myself to the Muchielli work. He explains, in fact, that in this case you shouldn't use a moral priority, rather we're taught to use modern technology to condition the masses. You have to create the right awareness with the people you want to mobilize, based on a feeling of indignation, indignation towards an enemy, an enemy which is taken as a scapegoat by using various techniques in order to create this feeling of indignation, and also hatred against this enemy, and also a fascination by the organizers of genocide; with this kind of work. The author himself, of course, is not advocating genocide, but they use his technology. So all the elements were there in Rwanda: low level literacy, a unanimous approach to things, and also a clear, and long existence of scapegoats, potential scapegoats, which had existed for 30 years, namely the Tutsi. So therefore there's a reference here to the Tutsi, the majority. So therefore there's a socioeconomic populism, therefore, basis of preeminence of Hutu people, whose absolute rights are based on their majority nature, and also on the fact that they can also state their supposed indigenous character, in contrast to the "outside" Tutsi character.

This ideology impregnated all public life in Rwanda since the beginning of the 1960s. And what seems important therefore, to us, in this extremist propaganda, which was developed in 1990s, and which prepared to genocide was the fact that it was rooted, rooted here, well two things; first there was an ideology already, which was they had seen for a generation, and also, and this comes back to this technical work of Muchielli, there was also a reference to the very effectiveness of this kind of argument, because they could disqualify all opponents in order to bring together the mass around a Hutu power movement, the growth of which was therefore promoted. Therefore you have a

democratic language that became a kind of technology to mobilize people in the totalitarian way under the cover of freedom of expression.

Now if we take the subjects of the RTLM, given all the programs that they broadcast, we can see that they're based on a double register, that of racist passion against the Tutsi, and also the feeling of legitimacy on behalf of the majority people. The first register, an ethno-racial one, I won't talk about that, because we don't have a lot of time, and everyone is familiar with it. What seems to be important is the second register, which seems really to deserve our attention. That way we can understand where the blindness came from. We can also understand why the propaganda was so effective. The essential reference from the months preceding genocide and during the massacres was therefore that of the majority people. The legitimacy of their self defense against a clique, a feudal clique, so therefore the normalcy of the massacre by the majority as an expression of anger, a democratic anger if you will. If the Hutu which are in our country, 90 per cent, if we can be beaten just by a 10 per cent clique, that means that we really haven't shown our own true strength. That was May 28, 1994, broadcast on RTLM. That's exactly what they said. May 14 now, the low size family in Rwanda is that of the Tutsi, the small group that came from abroad. There aren't too many of them here, maybe just 10 per cent, and this Rwanda belongs to me. I'm in the majority, so Rwanda belongs to me. So therefore this reference of the majority is essential therefore to legitimize massive mobilization, violent mobilization by those people around extremist leaders, and extremists policies, coalition for the defense, and also the Hutu power movement. April 3rd now, a few days before the beginning of the genocide. The real shield is the army. The day when the people rise up. So you can see it's not very democratic, and they don't want you any more. That is you the Tutsi, and they hate you so much. They hate you from the bottom of their hearts. You'll make them feel sick, and I wonder really how you can get out of this. How are you going to escape? You can understand therefore, the systematic massacre of these people became legitimate in their eyes as some of the people therefore interviewed by Jean Hatzfeld stated.

Therefore you see all this propaganda based on this, I've got a lot of other quotes also, but I've only got 10 minutes so I can't give them all. Therefore, what we're talking about here is a collective suicide of Tutsi. They chose to kill themselves, because they're the minority. Nevertheless, they did try and conduct political action. There's also a demographic force here, the certainty of victory, and I stress this, a clear, open conscience about this that they were fighting for the people. As the Belgian journalist, Georges Ruggiu, who worked for RTLM, pointed out, they killed about 50 people, said Radio France Internationale. He said this represents only about nine per cent, namely the Tutsi part. That is the proportion of people who, therefore you'd expect this. The historic reference therefore Marcel Kabanda pointed out, what struck me is historic reference, not just in the past of Rwanda, the social revolution in 1960s, but also the reference to the French Revolution even. Robespierre they quoted. Didn't Robespierre in France do the same thing? When he heard that on June 30 on RTLM. Or, you can compare the players here with the landings in Normandy in 1944. There were comparisons made with them in D-Day.

So what I want to point out here is this works, this approach in Rwanda. For some time really, it's repeated abroad. It comforts people with their normal prejudices, which exist, for example in France or even in Belgium, and so in Christian democratic circles, where they can easily have an ethnic interpretation of these things, and interpret this in a democratic way as the majority are holding power. In the 1990s, for example, this was presented clearly as being a democratic power, since the press had represented the ethnic majority.

They also could mention Georges Ruggiu biography, which I mentioned earlier. Georges Ruggiu, he wasn't a perpetrator of genocide. He was a young third world leader. He compared Rwanda with the favelas in Brazil, the slums of Brazil. But he also met militant students, Rwandan students in Belgium. He accepted their ideas of democracy, and rule by the majority. The Arusha Agreements therefore betrayed the people in his view. Therefore his populist convictions were almost naturally linked with the racial ideology, which was maintained by the extremists, and we also have to mention the western press here. On a number of occasions they said, I myself, for example, have seen in the French press in May and June in *Le Monde*, *Liberation*, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, I saw articles, where this ideology, this populist ideology, was stated. I think the blindness in our own countries about the nature of genocide, Dr. Beaverson (sic) of *Medecins Sans frontieres*, said on July 15, 1994, "neither France nor the international community, in fact, acquired the means to characterize the genocide, to understand what it was, and to understand the consequences of it." I myself often quote a statement by Alfred Grosser, author of *Le Crime et la Memoire*, "No it's not true, that a massacre of Africans is felt in the same way as a massacre of Europeans." There are three reasons for this; first the difference mentioned by General Dallaire, also, the kind of ethnographic screen here, which we have that appears, and I've probably mention all of this, and also the fact that genocide is seen as really being as a large mobilization, a democratic mobilization.