



Disinformation: the "Rwandan case study".

military-Earth thinking notebook

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Histoire & stratégie

**"The important thing is not the reality of life...
but what people believe"**

Roger Mucchielli

Then a Legion officer, I took part in the summer of 1994, as Commander of the Southern Group, in Operation Turquoise (21 June - 21 August 1994), from the 21st of June to the 21st of August. launched with the approval of the UN (resolution 924) in the south-west of Rwanda to establish a Safe Humanitarian Zone for a period limited to 2 months...

I had never previously served in Rwanda, neither as part of military cooperation (military cooperation agreements had been signed by France and Rwanda in 1975), nor as part of the military operations triggered by France to establish a Safe Humanitarian Zone for a limited period of 2 months...October 1990 to December 1993 (dates of the start and end of Operation Noroît) and then in April 1994 (evacuation of French and foreign nationals from Kigali at the start of the massacres that were to become the 1994 genocide).

From the outset, the context of the operation appeared to me to be singular and, to say the least, sensitive and "controversial"?

Indeed, as soon as I arrived in Rwanda, I remember being immediately interviewed by the Anglo-American media and being taken aback. by the question I was ingenuously asked to know if I was not "ashamed" to intervene in Rwanda "after what France had done or allowed to be done there"!

Since then, in view of the extent of the accusations made against our country and its army, throughout the world but also in France, including in the major media, I have become convinced that the dramatic events in Rwanda have not been in vain. Events were the subject of a disinformation operation, which was, moreover, perfectly carried out and successful until recently...

According to an expert, Vladimir Volkoff^[1], disinformation is the "...manipulation of public opinion for political purposes, with information being processed through the back door.».

Volkoff points out that "generally speaking, when a disinformant resorts to outright lies, in the long run they are discovered, without this necessarily altering the effect of the operation"! He gives some recent historical examples to support his assertions:

- "The mass grave in Timisoara was indeed a mortuary, but Ceausescu was overthrown";
- "The weapons of mass destruction denounced by the Pentagon as a pretext for the Allied intervention in Iraq did not exist, but Saddam Hussein was overthrown";
- "The 100,000 Albanian deaths in Kosovo were in reality "only" less than 4,000, but Serbia was indeed driven out of its northern province"
- etc...

As well, one could add:

- **"France had nothing to do with the outbreak of the Rwandan genocide in 1994 but its influence is now reduced as never before in Africa"!**

The disinformation operation concerning Rwanda is indeed very interesting to analyze, because it has led to two joint effects, indisputable, and not the least:

Through his so-called guilt in the Rwandan genocide,

- In 14 years, France has really lost most of its influence in Africa, to the point where it is now just a more or less passive spectator of the struggle between China and America. The French have really lost most of their influence in Africa in 14 years, to the point where they are now merely a more or less passive spectator of the struggle between China and the United States for strategic control of the Black Continent and its formidable reserves of raw materials, including in French-speaking Africa;
- Faced with this situation, France, struck by a terrible complex, even remorse, no longer has an African policy worthy of the name and does not seem ready to adopt it in a clear and determined manner. The Ivorian example is very significant in that regard.

The Volkoff approach

According to Volkoff, a disinformation operation is always presented as an information operation, but four symptoms make it possible to differentiate it and to become aware of the reality of things.

It therefore seems to me very interesting to apply his "symptom grid" to the Rwandan case:

- "Everybody says the same thing. But it is so little in the nature of men to think the

same thing"...

On the Rwandan case, read the international and French press, listen to the radios and watch television: almost everyone is unanimously convinced of the same truth: "There was a terrible genocide in Rwanda in 1994" (which is true) "and France, whether it acknowledges it or not, has a major share of responsibility in the unfolding of this tragedy" (which is false).

- "Public opinion is over-informed on only one aspect of the issue to the detriment of the others. And yet, "woe to the man of one book" and "we must listen to all the bells and whistles". If we think we have read all the books, and if we think we have heard all the bells and the bells only bring us back to one view of the problem, then someone wanted it that way and there is some prestidigitation underneath.»...

All the media, all the books published - with very rare exceptions, immediately suspicious and quickly demonized (need we recall the exemplary case of the publication of the work of the journalist Pierre Péan, yesterday adulated, and since then taxed with all the epithets: The book, by the journalist Pierre Péan, who was yesterday praised, and since then has been accused of all the epithets: "racist, negationist, a fraud in the service of the military and of the memory of his friend François Mitterrand", was devoted to describing the genocide of the Tutsis (and, it is often forgotten, of countless moderate Hutus!)) as the sole fact of the Hutu majority (which is true but insufficient without further explanations), supported without weakening by France (which is false).

- "All the good ones are on one side, all the bad ones on the other. But the reality of experience is rarely Manichean. No doubt there are just causes and unjust causes, but it never happens that all the just are on one side, and all the bastards on the other. Any presentation of information that tends to lead us to believe such an unnatural thing is suspect because it falls within the ideology of the western, where the colour of the Stetson hat - white or black - makes it possible to recognize the good from the bad. This oversimplification pleases the child in us and we are always ready to be fooled in this way, as much by laziness of mind as by innocence of heart.».

The "good ones" are of course the victims, the martyrs of the genocide: the Tutsis (we voluntarily forget the Hutus exterminated, as much by their Hutu brothers as before or afterwards by the Tutsis!), but also their liberators: the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front), Uganda, and world opinion, the best friend of the Tutsis and the RPF, including Bernard Kouchner, but also today, organisations such as Voltaire, Golias, Survie, Ibuka, and all those who are detaining the Tutsis.noncenters of "colonialism", "the Church", "François Mitterrand", "Françafrique", "the French army"...

The "bad ones": the Hutus and France who helped them without failing (but not without counterpart: the forced democratization of the regime!) from 1990 to 1993...

To put it plainly, all Hutus are bastards, official France too, and all Tutsis are untouchable because they are martyrs.

- "The acquiescence of opinion leads to a collective psychosis. That is the real objective of any disinformation operation. The consumer must ask for more, he must abandon all critical sense, he must demand permanent confirmation of the disinformation that has been administered to him like a drug addict asking for more drugs, he must succumb to the "vampirism" of disinformation: every bitten

becomes a biter, every disinformation becomes disinformation."

It is only to take the example of the film "Operation Turquoise" directed by Alain Tasma and Gilles Taurand and broadcast by Canal + in November 2007, to verify **the** relevance of this fourth symptom. All the clichés are there, the accusations, whether or not they are subtle against French policy in Rwanda, the more than direct allusions to the necessarily biased behaviour of the army. Thus, misinformed themselves, Tasma and Taurand start to disinform in their turn, in good faith, of course....

The Toffler's reading grid

According to American researchers Alvin and Heidi Toffler ([2]), quoted by Volkoff, a disinformation operation is characterized by the use of

- The accusation of atrocities

This is all the easier here, since there have indeed been countless atrocities, including those that constitute genocide. But they are obviously imputed and attributable only to the Hutus and to those who armed them, i.e. the French. In no way to the Tutsi rebellion, which is reputed to have waged its war in lace - even though today there are many tenet the least of which is the testimony of the large-scale massacres of Hutu peasants by the Tutsi rebellion in the four years before the genocide, and well afterwards in the years following its seizure of power[3].

- The hyperbolic swelling of the stakes

In the case of Rwanda, if one disregards the hundreds of thousands of deaths before and after the genocide, most of them Hutu, the focus today is on the commonly accepted figure of 1,200. This figure is closer to 800,000 deaths, but the search for the truth alone would call for greater caution and moderation in this macabre count. As if it were absolutely necessary to reach, and even better, to exceed the fateful figure of one million dead, in order better to strike the spirits and convince them of the abomination of this new Holocaust. For, here too, it is vital to draw a parallel between the Jewish and Tutsi genocides...as if they were the same thing....

By forgetting to recall not only the respective representations of the Tutsi and Hutu communities in this tragedy, but also by forgetting to recall their real responsibilities.

- The demonisation or dehumanisation of the adversary

The regime of the late President Juvénal Habyarimana (assassinated on 6 April 1994), more authoritarian and paternalistic than totalitarian (unlike his successor), forced from 1990 onwards by François Mitterrand to multiparty politics and inter-community dialogue, eventually died. But it is, without hesitation, today described without fear of ridicule, as a kind of "tropical Nazism". The reason of the strongest is always the best," La Fontaine used to say.

So today it is a whole people, the Hutu people (80% of the Rwandan population) who are being ostracized by the whole world. It is not good to be Hutu today, even if you were a saint! The demonization has played and is playing its full role allowing the regime of President Paul Kagame all the excesses and all the human rights violations without anyone moving or almost anyone in the international community.

- Polarization

It consists of removing all nuance. In disinformation, it is necessarily total. If you are not today a supporter of Kagame and his regime, it is because yesterday you were - necessarily - an accomplice to the genocide! If you give any credence to the conclusions of the anti-terrorist judge Bruguière (who, in closing the investigation into the circumstances of President Habyarimana's assassination on 6 April 1994, resulted in the arrest of a number of people, including the President of the United States of America, and the President of the United States of America. The fact that the French courts have issued nine international arrest warrants against President Kagame's close circle of acquaintances means that you are guilty of complicity in genocide and crimes against humanity!

- The invocation of a divine sanction

Even though we live in a secularized world, the invocation of a divine sanction - even if not explicit - retains an interesting moralizing connotation: If the Hutus are where they are today (i.e. if they are suffering under the boot of Kagame and his regime), it is because they have indeed deserved it. Come on, mass has been said!

- Metapropaganda,

or in other words, the art of discrediting information coming from the adversary by calling it "propaganda", a subtle and effective method.

Accusations of "revisionism" and "negationism" against academics, researchers, journalists, writers and witnesses professing an opinion that differs or even differs only from the authorized sound of the bell, underline this obvious fact. The imposed version of history, in this case "the genocide is the work of the Hutu regime supported by France" is information. While putting this genocide in its context, i.e., that of a civil war that began four years earlier, marked by terrible massacres on both sides, and continued in the following years by other acts of violence, the fact that it was carried out by the Hutu regime is a matter of information. Other abominable massacres on a large scale (in particular that of a few hundred thousand Hutu refugees massacred by the Tutsi army in the eastern forests of Zaire during the winter of 1995-1996) immediately led you to be labelled as a negationist and revisionist. Double standards!...Metapropaganda has had its effect.

Thus the examination of the Rwandan case in the light of the reading grids of the Toffler couple or Vladimir Volkoff, is, as we have just seen, particularly rich in reflections and lessons. There is no doubt that Rwanda is a magnificent textbook case of disinformation.

There is, however, no disinformation operation that does not have both a strategic motive and an inspirational force directly interested in its success.

With regard to Rwanda and Central Africa, we must of course remember that this small country plays an essential role at the heart of the Great Lakes region of Africa, a role that is today of the utmost importance, one that is not commensurate with its demographic weight, its surface area or its natural assets. In this respect, it is worth reading the fascinating latest work by the British novelist and MI6 alumnus John Le Carré, "Le chant de la mission" (The Song of Mission). In it, one can understand all the great and ongoing manoeuvres being carried out by the great world powers in this region of the Congo (the eastern provinces of the former Zaire, Kivu and Katanga, which has often been described

as a "geological scandal"!) for the control of its exceptional resources of rare and varied minerals, particularly coltan. The Rwanda of Kagame, the former leader of the Tutsi rebellion trained at Fort Leavenworth who was also the head of the Ugandan special services, is the faithful ally of the United States. He is even the "product" of it, via Museveni's Uganda works. He is the leading actor today in this military stranglehold on the fabulous mineral wealth of the region.

Yes, the disinformation operation carried out against France's role in Rwanda is not insignificant. Yes, it has indeed achieved its objectives, both tactically, on the one hand, to get France out of the Great Lakes region, and strategically, on the other hand, to greatly and lastingly weaken France's influence not only in the region but throughout Africa. The results are there.

1) Vladimir VOLKOFF (1932-2205), a French writer born in France of Russian Orthodox parents, an intelligence officer in Algeria, is in particular the author of "... a book on the history of the Russian Orthodox Church...". Disinformation, a weapon of war (Julliard - The Age of Man), a "A short history of the disinformation" (Editions du Rocher) and "Disinformation: flagrante delicto" (Editions du Rocher).

[2] Alvin TOFFLER is an American writer, sociologist [and](#) futurologist, born in 1928 in New York. He is one of the most famous futurologists in the world. He is the husband of Heidi [TOFFLER](#). He is also a writer and futurologist who is closely involved in the writing of his books, many of which have become world bestsellers.

Rwanda, the secret story" published in 2005 by Panama.

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