
Interview: Charles Onana

'American Credibility In Africa Is at Stake'

Investigative journalist Charles Onana, author of The Secrets of the Rwandan Genocide (see review, above), was interviewed by Christine Bierre and Esther Abin in Paris on Sept. 19. The discussion has been translated from the French.

EIR: Mr. Onana, your book provoked Paul Kagame, the President of Rwanda, to file suit in a Parisian court against you, for defamation. But his legal action was rejected by the court. What happened?

Onana: Kagame filed suit in March 2002, but the book had been published in November 2001. Under French law, an individual who deems himself defamed has three months, following the publication of the book, to file a complaint. Kagame's suit was not valid in the French juridical framework, and was thus rejected.

EIR: It is the content of your book, however, which has infuriated Kagame, because you accuse him of having plotted the attack against the airplane in which Rwandan President Habyarimana and Burundian President Ntaryamira were travelling, which triggered the Rwandan genocide of April 6, 1994.

Onana: Kagame was surprised to see that it was a journalist from black Africa who carried out an investigation which the Western press, the United Nations, and the International Criminal Tribunal at Arusha [in Tanzania] had decided to cover up. I want to first underline that I am neither a Hutu nor a Tutsi; I have friends in both camps and I have no personal interest in this affair. I am simply a professional who wanted to understand a tragedy which turned the world upside down. I wanted to find out why this dossier had been covered up and I soon realized that Kagame had many things to hide. I spent a whole night with one of his intelligence agents, who was with him at Mulindi—the evening of the attack against the plane—and who reported to me in detail everything that happened, and the attitude of Kagame that evening. Kagame knows well that I have spoken to his closest former collaborators and ministers, and that everything I have said concerning this attack comes from first-hand sources.

Blowing the lid off this dossier could be extremely important today, because it could lead to a re-evaluation of the official thesis on the genocide. Why? The thesis of Mr. Kagame's RPF [Rwandan Patriotic Front], considered today as the "official" thesis, claims that the Hutus prepared acts of



Rwandan strongman and President Paul Kagame (center) has long escaped serious investigation for the events that triggered the Rwandan genocide against Tutsis and moderate Hutus in 1994. A new book in French has helped to change that situation.

genocide against the Tutsis. That genocide would have been impossible, however, without the attack against the airplane. The key question is, therefore, who shot down the airplane? Who had an interest in committing that crime in order to provoke genocide? The information I have shows that Mr. Kagame, with a group of Tutsis that surrounded him, was the organizer of this attack. They are the ones who profitted from that crime, and it is for this reason that the Rwandan President has done all he could to cover up the subject during the last eight years.

EIR: Will you be using the occasion of the upcoming trial to bring out the explosive content of the case?

Onana: Of course, we will do everything to ensure that the truth of this dossier comes out in broad daylight. The witnesses who agreed to testify in our court case, and the elements of proof that we have assembled, are damning for Mr. Kagame, and will enable the public to understand exactly what happened. I really don't understand myself why he never carried out an investigation into this affair, in spite of the fact that international law demands that he do so, and that he claims to be innocent.

EIR: Your book is not the only thing that worries Kagame at present. There is also the International Criminal Tribunal at Arusha, and the investigation being carried out by the French judge, Bruguière. Would you say that Kagame is in a defen-

sive posture at this point?

Onana: Kagame fears the truth. Indeed, the International Criminal Tribunal must judge of crimes committed by the Tutsis as well as the Hutus. Until now, it has judged only the crimes of genocide committed by the Hutus, but has not yet taken up the war crimes committed by the RPF. Yet, from July to December 1994, the RPF committed hideous war crimes against its own citizens, Tutsi and Hutu alike. Today, it will appear that those who had proclaimed themselves the victims of a tragedy were in fact also the hangmen. Mr. Kagame is indeed in a very delicate position, because he will have to hand over to the Tribunal certain criminals within the Rwandan Patriotic Army. Yet how can he do that without also accusing himself, its chief?

EIR: But Kagame is trying to buy time; he forbids the Rwandan witnesses to go to the Tribunal—

Onana: Indeed, he has destroyed evidence; has incarcerated the President of the Republic [of Rwanda], Pasteur Bizimungu; he threatens [war crimes prosecutor] Carla del Ponte. In short, he exerts pressure and blackmail on everybody to stop the truth from coming to the fore, but this is a perilous exercise at this point, seeing that Kagame does not have much time.

EIR: What are you expecting of Judge Brugière's investigation?

Onana: All the defenders of human rights are expecting that this investigation will reveal who are the presumed authors of the April 6 [1994] attack. This investigation could be revolutionary from the political and juridical standpoint. Political, because paradoxically, the Tutsis were massacred during the genocide, [but] took power by force of arms, by the same occasion. The "logic" behind this situation will have to be clarified.

From the legal standpoint, the presumed authors of the attack [on the plane] will have to say what they knew about the planning of genocide against the Tutsis, and why they did nothing to stop it. At the close of 1993, Kagame's Rwandan Patriotic Army had close to 4,000 men infiltrated in the city of Kigali, under the nose of the United Nations. It is thus inconceivable that these men didn't fight to stop the tragedy against the Tutsis. Why was there no international warning against the fact that the regular Rwandan Armed Forces (under Hutu control) were planning genocide against the Tutsis and the Hutu moderates? At that point, Rwanda had a multi-party political system, with Hutus and Tutsis being part of the same government, and a similar situation in the opposition. How is it possible that nobody said anything?

EIR: In your book you describe very well the contribution of the Anglo-Americans to the acts committed by the RPF. You say that in the beginning of the 1990s, the Rwandan Patriotic Army had been practically defeated by the Rwandan



Kagame (center) during a 1997 visit to Germany which was widely protested by LaRouche associates and Rwandan groups in that country. In 1994, Kagame led a military force poised to invade Rwanda with Ugandan, British, and American backing. His armed forces have, since then, repeatedly invaded the Democratic Republic of Congo, contributing to genocidal war-fighting there.

Armed Forces. But, thanks to a well-financed and well-implemented offensive, in 1994 Kagame deployed as many as 4,000 men at the door of Kigali. You mention as well the training programs pursued by Kagame at the prestigious military school at Fort Leavenworth (Kansas), where George W. Bush himself was trained, and where training was given to RPF cadre, in the context of IMET (International Military Education and Training) and JCET (Joint Combined Exchange Training) of the American armed forces. Can you tell us more about this?

Onana: I don't know in detail the extent of support given by the Anglo-Americans to the RPF war effort. What is sure, however, is that they have the habit of supporting countries formerly colonized by the Anglo-Saxons. In 1990, France supported the Habyarimana regime in Rwanda, while the Americans and Great Britain decided to reinforce the good relations they already had with Uganda. At that time, Paul Kagame was Under-Director of the Ugandan secret services. Certain members of the Ugandan government had a double status: They were "Rwandan refugees" in Uganda, but at the same they held high-level positions in the Ugandan state administration. They used the Ugandan state to benefit from American military aid.

On the eve of the war launched by the RPF against the government of Habyarimana, in 1990, Paul Kagame was be-

ing trained in the United States. The RPF suffered heavy military losses at that time, because Uganda did not want to give full support to the Rwandan offensive. The Ugandan state did contribute part of the logistics for the effort. In 1994, Ugandan military aid was clearly more important, since the RPF would not have been able to have such sophisticated weapons without the aid of foreign countries.

One of my American colleagues who has worked a lot on this affair, [retired naval officer] Wayne Madsen, confirmed to me the logistical aid given by the United States to the RPF. And so did Cynthia McKinney, an Afro-American Congresswoman who investigated the concrete aid given to the RPF under the Clinton Administration. Those elements should allow the U.S. Congress to open up an investigation. The honor of the Americans and their credibility in Africa are at stake in this matter.

EIR: In your book, you underline the extent to which France, the United States, and Belgium have tried to cover up the role they played in the events leading to that genocide, going as far as to refuse the opening of investigations into the assassinations carried out against their own citizens in the period immediately following the April 6 attack. Among the Frenchmen murdered, was the whole crew of Habyarimana's plane, as well as two presumed DGSE [foreign intelligence] agents working in communications, and their wives. What does France have to hide?

Onana: Your question is interesting. Remember, that the fact that several Frenchmen were taken hostages in Jolo had been the number-one item in all the international press for at least ten days. It is curious that while five Frenchmen, at least, were brutally murdered in Rwanda at that time, there has been no outcry about this. It is strange!

Each of the powers involved had an interest in hushing up everything that it had done, in order to secure a strong ally in Rwanda, in the context of the power struggles over Zaire, in the period that preceded the Rwandan drama. It was a Pandora's box that nobody had an interest in opening.

What is more important in the case of France, is the existence of lobbies which did everything to make public opinion feel guilty, and to paralyze any attempt at an investigation. Once the media had hammered massively that the French had committed genocide in Rwanda with the aid of the Hutus, it became practically impossible for any courageous French citizen to intervene in favor of his fellow citizens. To this day, in the ranks of the French military, many are furious at the lack of courage of political figures who didn't support them. If the wife of the French pilot flying the plane had not filed a suit in a court of justice, everybody would have acted as if nothing had happened.

But all those networks financed by the RPF will be progressively unmasked and dismantled. France has the right to know by whom its citizens were murdered, and for what aim. This is a public health measure indispensable to France.

EIR: Can you name some of those networks?

Onana: Some are known, such as the association called "Survive," which I found against me in my court case and which claims to be a human rights association in Africa. There are many other such associations in France which should be investigated and dismantled.

EIR: Concerning Belgium, you talk about Maj. Bernard Ntuyahaga, a witness to the murders of the 11 Belgian UN soldiers in the hours that followed the genocide.

Onana: Belgium has accused this man of being responsible for the murders, because it is he who drove the bus that transported those Blue Helmets to Kigali on April 7th. This man, of whom I met the family and published one of his letters, wants to testify in front of a Belgian court. As strange as this might appear, he has been in jail in Tanzania for five years, even though that country has nothing to do with the genocide. The International Criminal Tribunal has no charges against him. Why is Belgium refusing to hear this man's testimony, in spite of the fact that there is a dossier on him at the Brussels Court of Appeals, instructed by Judge Van de Mech? On the other hand, Rwanda wants to examine this man, who has been proclaimed innocent by the tribunal. . . . It's a technique to provoke confusion in everybody.

EIR: You are optimistic, however; you seem to think that we are on the verge of a breakthrough. Your book is a bookstore success.

Onana: It's the unexpected work of a journalist, the fact that an investigation managed to provoke a shock wave. When I wrote this book, I didn't imagine that one day the International Criminal Tribunal would decide to judge the members of the RPF as well; or that Kagame would be forced to announce, during a closed session of the UN Security Council, the unconditional retreat of his troops in the Republic of Congo. I think one cannot hide the truth eternally.

EIR: Does your book circulate in Rwanda?

Onana: It does, hidden under coats, and in photocopies. There has been a lot of press coverage and it became the object of a real national debate.

EIR: Is there the risk of a new genocide in the Great Lakes Region, as a result of a possible "flight forward" by Mr. Kagame?

Onana: I have warned the Congolese and the Rwandans about this, in relation to the policies of terror carried out by the [Rwanda-run] Patriotic Armed Forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C.). We can definitely fear that the violence exerted by the soldiers of the Rwandan Patriotic Army, who are deployed in the D.R.C., Rwanda, and Burundi, may turn against the Tutsi majority, which has nothing to do with Mr. Kagame. It is therefore urgent that the international community wake up to this danger.