

The lies told about the responsibility of the Rwandan Church in the genocide in order to hide the lies of the Trilateral Commission and of big business

After I handed in my book “África, la madre ultrajada” (*Africa, The Violated Mother*) to Editorial Milenio for publication, almost when the book was about to come out, the Spanish newspaper Público, which had conducted an appalling campaign against us, launched another attack. On March 23, 2010, the paper published an article by the journalist Nicole Thibon entitled “The Church and the Rwandan Genocide.” The article was a propaganda piece which transgressed all boundaries of journalistic ethics and of decency itself. Nevertheless, the article has been appearing for months among the first results in Google when you search the phrase “genocidio ruandés” (*Rwandan genocide*) – sadly, a measure of how easily our society can be manipulated and its emotions exploited in order to hinder any sound judgment.

The article features a cartoon at the top that shows a high-rung priest with a hideous skull for a face and a cassock stained by blood and raising his right hand to give a blessing in a cemetery full of crosses. The article starts, no less, by saying:

“[...] according to a U.N. report dated November 2009, the militias of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) “may have well been receiving ongoing political, logistical and financial support from people linked to the Catholic foundations El Olivar and Inshuti” as well as funding “coming directly and indirectly from the Government of the Balearic Islands.” The country is now ruled by Tutsi president Paul Kagame; but Hutu militias – accused of lootings, murders, rapes and abduction of children in the Congolese region of Kivu – are set on regaining power. What is really astonishing is the involvement of groups within the Catholic church in the internal politics of that African country.”

Clearly, such a barrage of statements from a newspaper with such close ties to the Socialist government of Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero didn't sit at all well with the fellow members of the Socialist government of Francesc Antich in the Balearic Islands. Being linked to such murky matters was evidently a source of concern to them. Things will surely settle down, though, if they haven't already...these things do happen among comrades. What yet remains to be seen is whether the Government of the Balearic Islands will still have the mettle to continue providing support, even if at a small scale, to the activities of our foundation. Our foundation initiated and was the main financial backer of the lawsuit which resulted in Spain's Audiencia Nacional judge Fernando Andreu Merelles issuing arrest warrants against 40 top officials of the Rwandan Patriotic Front/Rwandan Patriotic Army. The foundation has also been the driving force of the Inter-Rwandan Dialogue which, together with the lawsuit, have considerably infuriated the gang of criminals led by Paul Kagame. It is no surprise then that those “black furies” who have as godfathers the most powerful lobbies in the world, as well as all the “white liars” (as Pierre Péan calls them) who, like Nicole Thibon, are devoted to cleaning up the image of those thugs while smearing the reputation of people like us who stand on their way, will be thrilled if the activities of our foundation get nipped in the bud. That was precisely the goal they were pursuing. Yet all these goings-on behind the scenes are mere subtleties to those who like gore and a visceral anticlericalism.

Nicole Thibon then sets out to present an image of the Rwandan Church which is

not just slanderous and humiliating, but outright criminal. She criminalizes the Church, putting it in the bull's eye of a regime which is – indeed – truly criminal. Below, I list only a few of the lies in her analysis:

- She presents a Church which from the outset was at odds with the Tutsi and an accomplice of the Hutu. In fact, all prelates prior to the Swiss André Perraudin who in 1954 succeeded Leon Classe, had actually sought – in sharp contrast to the ways of Jesus of Nazareth – to ally themselves with the Tutsi elite and convert the royal family so that the people would follow in their suit and be baptized. Yet as early as 1907, only seven years after the arrival of the first missionaries (the White Fathers), the royal uncle Kabare, who actually held the real power, had encouraged young Tutsis to learn the catechism as preparation for baptism and to go to school. The response was overwhelming, and masses of youngsters soon turned into the most impassioned catechumens and pupils. It was only when the Church started adopting stances much closer to the teachings of the Gospel that it gradually became the big enemy of the Tutsi elites. “How is it possible to imagine a struggle for power which makes use of the ethnic component and where the clergy doesn’t represent a major trump card? Is it by chance that the Tutsi constitute 67% of the Catholic clergy and 90% of the Josephites, the country’s largest male religious order? [...] The assassination of the [three] Catholic bishops of Kabgayi [carried out by the RPF] marks the start of a big effort to denigrate the Church. This practice falls into a scheme to revise the history of Rwanda, a revision which seeks to state that the genocide of the Tutsi had been decades in planning and that the Catholic Church, presented as an instrument of Belgian colonization, contributed to setting up that genocide. And so then, this Church now suffers the consequences, not of having provided limitless support to the Tutsi elite during the Belgian colonial administration, but rather of making a shift in the late 50s towards a social commitment to help the Rwandan needy, both Hutu and Tutsi, who were oppressed by the feudal monarchy. It was around this time that the Church started to take seriously the teachings of the Gospel in matters of social justice. Furthermore, it adopted a social approach which gave it the strength not to mince any words when denouncing injustice.”¹ Those seeking to interpret the shift of the Rwandan Church in terms of spurious local interests are wrong: the new direction indeed represented a movement of complete renewal in the universal Church. These were the years when the endearing John XXIII was Pope (1958-63) and when the Second Vatican Council fostered a return to Gospel sources. The Church of Rwanda, in addition, was fortunate to welcome André Perraudin, a vicar apostolic with that spirit of renewal, as its head.
- Even though Thibon admits that “the Church cannot be blamed for having created the categories or ‘races’ Hutu and Tutsi” (making the Church responsible for the ethnic realities that had existed in Rwanda centuries before it got there would have been the last straw!), she dares to ascertain that the Church “has contributed to widening and justifying the rift between two groups which had never been at odds throughout the centuries except for squabbles between Tutsi farmers and Hutu shepherds.” Having the nerve to deny Rwanda’s secular history is astonishing, since the latter is well documented and ridden with

¹ James Gasana, Rwandan Minister of Defense from April 16, 1992 to July 18, 1993, and considered a true moderate by everyone: “Nuevo frente contra la Iglesia”, Mundo Negro, April 2000.

conquests, clashes, killings and oppression among the ethnic groups and even among the different Tutsi clans themselves.

- Alexis Kagame, Rwanda's leading historian, a member of the Tutsi royal court himself who was intimately familiar with the latter's private affairs, and who wrote countless ethnographic and linguistic studies, is portrayed by Nicole Thibon almost as though he were a Hutu extremist and racist activist.
- Thibon further depicts the descendants of that Tutsi royal aristocracy, who had never accepted losing their outrageous privileges, as Communists who stood up for the long-suffering Rwandan people vis-a-vis the colonists and missionaries.
- Thibon takes up again the fallacies stated by Pierre Galand, who years back had portrayed the purchase of machetes for the Hutu peasantry as a kind of big arms deal geared to paving the way for the genocide. Both Pierre Galand and Nicole Thibon "forget" to explain that such purchases were standard practice in Rwanda where machetes are key agricultural tools. By omitting to mention this, they make readers forever associate, at an unconscious level, the terms 'Hutu' and 'machete' with 'genocide.' It would be warranted to ask them why, besides, they forget to make any mention of the Kalashnikov weapons used by the Rwandan Patriotic Front that have caused a much higher, unrivalled number of deaths both in Rwanda and Congo. It's surely too risky for Galand and Thibon to make an explicit link between 'Kalashnikov' and 'liberation' – they're better off leaving that link in the dark of the subliminal realm.
- Thibon takes advantage of the fact that people have no clue about all these incidents, and dares to state: "Monsignor Perraudin's 1957 homily on charity and his racist pastoral letter on Lent, February 11, led directly to the 'killing on All Saints' Day' in 1959 in which peasants armed with machetes burnt down Tutsi farms, causing tens of thousands of deaths and a similar amount of refugees." The most "racist" sentence in the famed afore-mentioned homily, the most "inflammatory" sentence that finally – after centuries of injustice and social exclusion in the country – this representative of the Church, a good man afflicted by the suffering of the needy, dared to utter to the powerful criminal elites, was in fact: "This law [the divine law of justice and social charity] requires the institutions of a country to be such as to indeed guarantee to every citizen and every legitimate social group the same fundamental rights and the same opportunities for personal mobility and participation in public matters. Institutions that would establish a regime of privileges, favoritism and protectionism either for individual persons or for social groups, would not be in accordance with Christian moral doctrine."²
- With regard to the members of the Rwandan clergy who Thibon has no problem accusing of being *genocidaires*, it is enough to point out the best-known among them, Bishop Agustín Misago. The false accusations against him became so obvious that the judges of the Kigali court had no choice but to acquit him from them all in June 2000. Ten years later, in her article dated March 2010, Nicole Thibon has the cheek to write: "he was arrested in 1999 for the role he

² The entire Letter mentioned above can be found in <http://www.inshuti.org/perraud5.htm>

played in the genocide.” Just like that, without saying anything else at all. Likewise, after conducting a true moral lynching against Misago, the Spanish daily El País did not publish a single word on his acquittal. If Hutu members of the clergy may well have been criminally responsible on an individual basis, i.e. as private individuals, so have other Tutsi clergy members as well. This, however, does not justify at all the deceitful campaign to criminalize “the Church”, a campaign aimed at nothing else but at criminalizing those people who could one day succeed in putting the RPF stronghold of power at risk, namely, the Hutu intellectual elite, among whom the clergy are a key group.

A fierce, systematic campaign such as the one conducted against our non-denominational foundation, committed to working within the interreligious context of the Non-Violence Movement, has linked it to the Catholic church in order to ‘kill two birds with one stone.’ The fact is that this fallacious campaign, which has reached an unprecedented level of slander and libel, especially against the Church, clearly reveals many of the key facts of this story. To cite just a few examples:

- The large interests at stake that are able to foster and conduct such powerful disinformation campaigns that they can even call upon and avail themselves of the U.N., campaigns in which instalments such as this article by Nicole Thibon can never be considered to be chance isolated occurrences. The pillaging of Congo, a nation awash in resources, has been a priority target for the world’s most powerful lobbies at least for the last two decades. And Paul Kagame is nowadays a “blessing” in this pillaging. It is unnecessary to go into more detail about the truth of this fact that is, otherwise, perfectly clear to anybody minimally versed in the subject.
- The fact that our non-violent struggle for truth, justice and reconciliation is causing a considerable amount of aggravation to the criminals behind these events.
- The shameful role currently played by an alleged international left that holds ties which are much too close to organizations such as the Trilateral Commission, created by David Rockefeller and the ideologist Zbigniew Brzezinski. For two decades, this commission has succeeded in filling all international, decision-making positions in the conflict of the Great Lakes. We do well to remember that, according to Zbigniew Brzezinski, the commission was created with the aim of “establishing an international system that cannot be affected by the *blackmail* from the Third World.” Later, during the Kyoto Summit in 1975, he stated that “the main axis of conflict is no longer found between the Western world and the Communist world but between the advanced countries and the developing countries.” Almost everyone who has played a key political role in the Rwandan conflict has been or still is a member of the Trilateral Commission, and/or has attended or attends the meetings of the Bilderberg Group³: Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Margaret Thatcher, Kofi Annan, Madeleine Albright, Bill Richardson, Sadako Ogata, Susan Rice, Raymond Chrétien, Jean Chrétien, Hillary Clinton, or Bernard Kouchner. This list does not

³ Regarding the Bilderberg Group, it wouldn’t actually be right to even use the word “member” to refer to the attendees of its annual meetings, not even for those who attend them most regularly: the intent has always been to portray the Group as a mere forum of analysis and thought.

take into account the higher count of members of the Foreign Relations Council or of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. ‘Oddly enough’, Miguel Barroso, who has held close ties to the daily newspaper Público ever since its founding, turns out to be married to Spain’s Minister of Defense Carmen Chacón, who, in turn, had been one of the few Spanish members of the Trilateral Commission for a period of 12 years until mid-2010. Also ‘coincidentally’, Juan Luis Cebrián, as well as other public dignitaries close to the newspaper El País (the other major daily which conducted the campaign against us and which has held an obscure stance on the conflict from the outset), is one of the few Spaniards who, together with several other high-ranking officials at Spain’s Ministry of Foreign Relations, are zealous attendees of Club Bilderberg meetings, the club which gave rise to the Trilateral Commission. The conflict in Africa of the Great Lakes reveals, like no other before, the contradiction that exists between the official goals of these exclusive clubs and their actual practices which are having extremely serious consequences. Those of us who see through the propaganda of disinformation and know the key role that some – in fact, too many – members of these organizations play in the origin and evolution of this conflict, are well aware that behind their honourable facade lie hidden very grave criminal responsibilities.

- The important role the Church is currently playing, especially in Congo, as it refuses to comply with those parties with large interests at stake. This Church continues to be one of the few institutions to raise its inconvenient voice and speak up against them. As a result, the Church has been enduring true persecution ever since Monsignor Christophe Munzihirwa was assassinated in October 1996. Those who love bipartisanship and all types of Manichean dualism, those who are passionate about the usual rigid clichés (left and right ideologies, clericalism and anticlericalism, etc) surely don’t feel too well at ease with the kind of analysis I’ve made in the former section. Others may well regard this reasoning as mere speculation about imaginative conspiracies... Some people’s memory is like a sieve, they seem to have forgotten by now that the same powerful Anglo-Saxon lobbies conducted similar campaigns in Latin America to neutralize a Church which served as a liberating force committed to truth and justice. The strategy they carried out and continue to carry out there is well-known: fostering the presence of spiritualist sects that are indulgent with power and that purposefully avoid analyzing the social and political situation or getting involved in a struggle for social justice. In addition, their strategy vies, as far as possible, to get the Catholic Church to adopt this same stance. This is the same strategy they are carrying out in Rwanda and Congo. “Those holding power in Rwanda currently regard the Catholic Church as its key enemy. Given the socio-economic role it has always played in Rwanda, this Church heads the list of institutions that need to be ‘tutsified’ at any expense in order for the government to run the politics of the country more easily. When an RPF squad murdered three Catholic bishops, they were precisely paving the way to bring structural change to the ethnic makeup in the Church’s hierarchy. [...] The relationship between Protestant churches and the government is a matter of similar concern nowadays. The state is reigniting relations with them and using them to offset the Catholic Church. A typical example is the Episcopal Church, which is strengthening its ties to power after having replaced many Hutu with

Tutsi as a result of government pressure.”⁴ Missionaries and most of the native clergy in these African nations are so devoted to working on urgent tasks to help the people that they don’t have time to defend themselves against the slanderous rumours spread about them in the media. For this reason, articles like the one written by Nicole Thibon – if they deserve to be called articles – can go unanswered for months.

Lately, however, *Público* has markedly changed its tone. Those of us who endured the tone of the former stage greatly welcome this change. There are many reasons why it could have come about. Prime Minister José Luis Zapatero’s noble decision not to meet with Paul Kagame recently (due to the strong campaign we waged with hundreds of NGOs, NGO platforms and coordinators, relatives of Paul Kagame’s Spanish victims; as well as a group of congressmen, senators and city councils) could have perhaps forced the newspaper to unmask this criminal in order to justify the decision made by our president. Another possibility is that honest professionals in this newspaper may have opened their eyes in view of this outrageous farse, like so many others like us did earlier: Colonel Luc Marchal, top commander of the Blue Helmets in Kigali during the genocide of the spring of 1994; journalist Helmut Strizek; historian Bernard Lugan; prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal Carla del Ponte – among others. Or perhaps the explanation lies in a much more complex set of reasons, many of which we are not aware of. At any rate, it is a welcome change.

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⁴ James Gasana, *ibid.*