

English Summary of the German presentation by Dr Wolfgang Reinhardt

on 22 March 2024 in Berlin

as part of the international conference

„ON FIGHTING DENIAL AND GENOCIDE IDEOLOGY
A case of 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda”

Recognising the threat of genocide denial

in relation to the genocide against the Tutsi - especially in Germany

The INTRODUCTION dealt with the task of recognising the genocide ideology and denial patterns with regard to the genocide against the Tutsi in Germany in the first place:

1. surprisingly, in Germany, which has been very active in the field of investigative journalism in many areas, there is not a single piece of research on this important topic of international networks of genocide deniers and revisionists presenting "an alternative history of genocide". They are made up of organisers and perpetrators of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, their intellectual supporters and successor organisations, lawyers, academics, journalists and church circles.

German research and the media could draw inspiration from the extensive international research.

2 The speaker then spoke about the issue of **Terminology**

While a distinction between *denial* and *denialism* (French: *négationisme*) is possible in English, in German one (could not find easily a single word but) would have to speak of *denial ideology* or the *complex of denial rhetoric*, including relativisation, trivialisation, distortion of origins and history.

The distinctions of the scientific study *The Killing of Death* by the criminologist ROLAND MOERLAND of: "Official Denial", "Recycling of Official Denial" and "Broader Implications" in the promotion of denial rhetoric by academics, journalists, etc.

can be applied to the German situation:.

A. Germany was for a long time a safe haven for genocidaires and an open field for the propaganda of Rwandan terrorists until three groundbreaking trials took place.

For example, the president of the collective pool of genocidaires and the terrorist organisation FDLR Murwanashyaka enclosed a lengthy letter with his application for asylum in Germany, stating that Paul Kagame had been "systematically" committing genocide against the Hutu population of Rwanda since October 1990." Already during the genocide (!) in April 1994, the partnership association *Akagera-Rhein e. V.* was founded by IGNACE MURWANASHYAKA and STRATON MUSONI together with other Rwandan Hutu students in Germany, which spread denial rhetoric in Germany for years.

On the FDLR website, one could read: "The Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) are Rwandans determined to defend their motherland, which is constantly threatened with annihilation by a tyrannical and barbaric regime."

Murwanashyaka, who is also president of the German section of the RDR political party, was able to issue his orders from Germany to the fighters in eastern Congo, who carried out terrible massacres, mass rapes and cruel forms of sexual violence, unnoticed. He and his deputy Straton Musoni were finally convicted in the longest trial in Stuttgart's judicial history...

In a further trial (in Düsseldorf), three "**supporters**" of the FDLR who had continued their propaganda were sentenced to a suspended sentence, as the defendants had confessed.

B. The "recycling" of genocide ideology and denial by German supporters

German solidarity with Rwandan genocidaires

In a groundbreaking trial, the first genocide judgement outside Germany was handed down in 2011 by the Frankfurt Higher Regional Court against (former mayor) ONESPHORE RWABUKOMBE, who was accused of massacring 2000 Tutsi refugees in a church in Kiziguro and sentenced to life imprisonment after appeal.

His arrest was immediately criticised by German supporters of the old regime, who said it was an expression of German solidarity "with a military government that tramples on human rights and has morphed from an authoritarian to a totalitarian dictatorship." A German author then "recycles" all the often refuted accusations that can be found in the rhetoric of the genocidaires and in the wider circle of supporters of the Hutu regime.

Particularly noteworthy here is the most extreme negationist in Germany, HELMUT STRIZEK (who was already proposed as an "expert witness" by the defence in the trial in Frankfurt am Main, but was rejected due to bias and personal friendship with the accused).

Strizek's close links to other well-known genocide deniers such as ROBIN PHILPOT, his brother John Philpot and VICTOIRE INGABIRE UMUHOZA are evident in his publications. In his late work he refers to the infamous book by the Canadian author JUDI REVER In Praise of Blood.

A paper in itself would be about the recycling of genocide denial rhetoric in social media.

C. Support for genocide ideology arguments by German authors and journalists

- 1) The arrest of VICTOIRE INGABIRE triggered a storm of protest among German journalists and human rights activists without anyone even bothering to look into the programme of the FDU Inkingi party and Ingabire's links to the FDLR.
- 2) Even after the arrest of PAUL RUSESABAGINA, the protests in the media were all too quickly driven by prejudices and without having carefully followed the accusations: the evidence of Rusesabagina's co-responsibility for the terrorist attacks on 9 civilians in Rwanda. On youtube one could see that this alleged "man of reconciliation" publicly called for "every means to bring about change in Rwanda". Many articles still portrayed him as the great "Hero of Hotel Rwanda", although there were many statements to the contrary from the hotel's residents. And almost all German articles failed to mention Rusesabagina's years of propaganda activities,

Conclusion and Outlook

- Negationism", denial of the planned genocide of 1994, in its various facets and gradations, has played **a significant role in Germany** to this day.
- We must abandon the naïve idea that denial only means the flat denial that a genocide took place. Rather, it is about a whole complex of **recurring patterns of argumentation**.
- The speaker wished that in particular **our young people would engage with negationism** in social media and be at least as active as the new, growing generation of young revisionists. He hoped that the battle had not yet been lost (as Laetitia Tran Ngoc feared).
- There is an urgent need for **European and perhaps global cooperation** in order to create a "negationism archive, and to regularly exchange information internationally and then, if possible, to participate together in Rwanda events.
- The Rwandan government, which has resolutely tackled the actually impossible task of post-zero reconstruction and a policy of unity and reconciliation instead of the expected revenge, deserves **more fairness and support** in the face of the hair-raising falsifications of history and massive attacks by revisionists worldwide, despite all justified criticism.
- Let us never forget: this is **not a matter of detached science**. That is why **authentic testimonies** (as in Denise's lecture on this day) and encounters with survivors are of lasting importance. It is also important that the process of healing the traumatised rescapés and the reconciliation process, which is so exemplary worldwide, **is not jeopardised by genocide deniers** who want to turn back the wheel of history.