

# RPF Troops Poised to Grasp Hollow Victory in Rwanda

Chris McGreal

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**Regime collapses as president and prime minister flee to French zone.**

By Chris McGreal in Goma, Zaire.

The near defunct administration of Rwanda jokes that the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) will govern a country without a people, while it will govern a people without a country.

As much of Rwanda's remaining population spills into Zaire, it has the ring of truth. The RPF has almost achieved victory and the last members of the government fled to the town of Cyangugu, in the south-west French protection zone near Zaire, yesterday.

"The president, prime minister and many of the ministers are in Cyangugu," the social affairs minister, Jean-de-Dieu Habimeza, said in Goma, eastern Zaire, where he and some of his colleagues had fled.

The Tutsi-based RPF occupies more than two-thirds of the country and is apparently unstoppable, except in the French zone.

It is close to formalising a new administration which will give prominent positions to Hutus. But who the new government will govern, and with what support, is another matter.

Of the 7 million citizens who once packed what was Africa's most densely

populated country, more are beyond the RPF's authority than under it.

Jean Kambanda, prime minister of the defunct regime, has conceded military defeat, but says the RPF cannot maintain power unless Rwanda remains heavily depopulated. If that happens, he predicts a resurgence of war.

"Despite everything we will not accept to die without fighting. We have lost a battle, it is true. But we know, under other skies, countries which are completely and utterly conquered have come back. There is no reason why their return cannot be repeated here," he said.

A former Rwandan ambassador to neighbouring Uganda, now a refugee, said: "How can you say you govern the country when people see you and they run away? It's much better to be a refugee than to be killed. The visible proof that they lack support is that the town of Kigali is empty."

The RPF has said it is fighting to establish democracy. But with a sizeable proportion of the minority Tutsi population slaughtered, and the Hutu majority living in terror of the RPF, it could hardly hope to win an election in the unlikely event of one soon.

The RPF is planning a coalition

with some opposition parties, led by Hutus who survived the massacres. Many liberal Hutu politicians were the first targets for murder and few survivors command respect among the hundreds of thousands of fleeing Rwandans.

Fear among Hutus is acute. The RPF is not guilty of atrocities similar to the genocide against the Tutsis. But it has carried out systematic summary executions of those it identified as responsible for the slaughter. They often included government officials, whether or not they had a direct hand in the killings.

The RPF has also not shown restraint when civilians get in the way of its military advance. Combined with the administration's vicious propaganda, the effect has been to convince large numbers of Hutus that the RPF intends to exact a revenge as bloody as

the extermination of Tutsis.

The French-controlled zone will continue to provide a relatively safe haven for Hutu refugees for some weeks. The UN is scheduled to assume responsibility for the zone at the end of August, and will eventually be forced to cede control to the RPF-led administration once the war is over.

Hutu refugees will then have the choice of moving on, or taking a chance on RPF promises.

The RPF may also be able to build stability by working with the army it has been fighting. Ten senior commanders in the south-west declared themselves neutral this week and effectively abandoned the conflict, albeit from within the protection of the French zone.

But it is clear that the army no longer considers itself answerable to the civilian administration holed up in a hotel within a short dash of Zaire.