

Rwanda History to Independence

The Twa were the original inhabitants of Rwanda and were followed (c.A.D. 1000), and then outnumbered, by the Hutus. In the 14th or 15th cent., the Tutsis migrated into the area, gained dominance over the Hutus, and established several states. By the late 18th cent. a single Tutsi-ruled state occupied most of present-day Rwanda. It was headed by a *mwami* (king), who controlled regionally based vassals who were also Tutsi. They in turn dominated the Hutus, who, then as now, made up the vast majority of the population. Rwanda reached the height of its power under Mutara II (reigned early 19th cent.) and Kigeri IV (reigned 1853–95). Kigeri established a standing army, equipped with guns purchased from traders from the E African coast, and prohibited most foreigners from entering his kingdom.

Nonetheless, in 1890, Rwanda accepted German overrule without resistance and became part of German East Africa. A German administrative officer was assigned to Rwanda only in 1907, however, and the Germans had virtually no influence over the affairs of the country and initiated no economic development. During World War I, Belgian forces occupied (1916) Rwanda, and in 1919 it became part of the Belgian League of Nations mandate of Ruanda- Urundi (which in 1946 became a UN trust territory). Until the last years of Belgian rule the traditional social structure of Rwanda was not altered; considerable Christian missionary work, however, was undertaken.

In 1957 the Hutus issued a manifesto calling for a change in Rwanda's power structure that would give them a voice in the country's affairs commensurate with their numbers, and Hutu political parties were formed. In 1959, Mutara III died and was succeeded by Kigeri V. The Hutus contended that the new *mwami* had not been properly chosen, and



fighting broke out between the Hutus and the Tutsis (who were aided by the Twa). The Hutus emerged victorious, and some 100,000 Tutsis, including Kigeri V, fled to neighboring countries. Hutu political parties won the election of 1960; Grégoire Kayibanda became interim prime minister. In early 1961 a republic was proclaimed, which was confirmed in a UN-supervised referendum later in the year. Belgium granted independence to Rwanda on July 1, 1962.

Independence and Civil Strife

Kayibanda was elected as the first president under the constitution adopted in 1962 and was reelected in 1965 and 1969. In 1964, following an incursion from Burundi, which continued to be controlled by its Tutsi aristocracy, many Tutsis were killed in Rwanda, and numerous others left the country. In 1971–72, relations with Uganda were bitter after President Idi Amin of Uganda accused Rwanda of aiding groups trying to overthrow him. In early 1973 there was renewed fighting between Hutu and Tutsi groups, and some 600 Tutsis fled to Uganda.

On July 5, 1973, a military group toppled Kayibanda without violence and installed Maj. Gen. Juvénal Habyarimana, a moderate Hutu who was commander of the national guard. In 1978 a new constitution was ratified and Habyarimana was elected president. He was reelected in 1983 and 1988. In 1988 over 50,000 refugees fled into Rwanda from Burundi.

Two years later Rwanda was invaded from Uganda by forces of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), consisting mainly of Tutsi refugees. They were repulsed, but Habyarimana agreed to a

new multiparty constitution, promulgated in 1991. In early 1993, after Habyarimana signed a power-sharing agreement, Hutu violence broke out in the capital; subsequently, RPF forces launched a major offensive, making substantial inroads. A new accord was signed in August, and a UN peacekeeping mission was established.

