

## **Box 4: Édouard Karemera: from serving the MRND to implementing genocide**

Édouard Karemera was born on 1 September, 1951, in Mwendo, in Kibuye Prefecture. He attended Collège du Christ-Roi in Nyanza in 1964 like quite a number of other personalities, to earn the Certificat d'Humanités Général. He then obtained the grade of Candidat en Droit in the Catholic University in Louvain.

Upon his return to Rwanda in 1976, he was appointed to the Ministry of Justice, and attached to the President of the Supreme Court, Fulgence Seminega (Hutu, Byumba), who requested his commissioning as "Chief Legal Counsel in the Supreme Court of Appeal". A Presidential Order of 11 January, 1977 finally posted him as Legal Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior under Lieutenant-Colonel Alexis Kanyarengwe's orders. On 5 July, 1978, due to his «outstanding» and «exceptional» merits, Édouard Karemera was appointed Secretary General of the Ministry of Public Service and Employment, from where he was transferred, on 16 January, 1979 to the Legal Affairs Office at the Presidency of the Republic. He worked under Siméon Nteziryayo (Hutu, Cyangugu), at the time Minister at the Presidency, with the rank of a Prime Minister but without real authority over the Ministers, before he himself became a Minister in the government of 29 March 1981.

That was quite a dazzling career, as Édouard Karemera had already been co-opted into the nucleus of power during his appointment by the «Founding President» to the MNRD Central Committee in 1979. He also appeared for the first time in the Organizational Chart of the broad-based Central Committee set up by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Congress of the MNRD held in December 1980.

The Ministry of Public Service and Employment he was granted was politically considered as a key Ministry that regulated careers and all important positions in a country where practically the entire labor market depended solely on government employment. All decisions came down from or went up to the Presidency that kept a tight rein on matters.

Here, his competence was once more appreciated because 10 months afterwards, he became number two of the Government of 8 February, 1982, following the renewal of the National Assembly, when he was appointed as Minister at the Presidency of the Republic in charge of Political, Administrative and Institutional Affairs. His «Godfather», Minister Siméon Nteziryayo saw his functions being reduced to Economic and Financial Affaires. Reality was indeed more complex; Édouard Karemera was consecrated like Siméon Nteziryayo, as a direct collaborator of the President, as coordinator of part of a team of diverse Directors and Advisers gravitating towards the nebulous, but flexible, Presidency Services' Organizational Chart, and finally as the inevitable intermediary between the Presidency and the Members of Government.

But there was division of labor between Siméon Nteziryayo, a technocrat, economist-statistician by training, very full of himself and Édouard Karemera, a competent, enthusiastic and «available» jurist-politician. The first, man behind the scenes, was highly respected and highly considered as a «noble» was more acquainted with the diplomatic personnel than with political rivals. If all important files, notably the economy-related ones, transited at one time or another through his hands, he did not seem an efficient political link during such troubled times when the envisaged National Development Council (CND) was expected to institute a direct link between the "Father of the Nation" and the

population, instead of the great rival lineages of Ruhengeri. Such was Édouard Karemera's function, pushed forward by the President to relay his messages and follow-up compliance by the new crop of politicians just elected by universal suffrage.

As was then believed in presidential circles, Édouard Karemera, a native of Mwendo, was already "mukiga" (nordiste), in any event, less "*Munyanduga*" (sudiste) than the others. His impulsive, straightforward nature was also appreciated as well as the distance he kept from potential opponents like Frédéric Nzamurambaho, Minister of Agriculture, also from the South, thus keeping the option of a regional alliance between them. To the bosses of the regime, Édouard Karemera only existed or derived his authority at the pleasure of the President. Would he have wished otherwise, his being a native of his prefecture and even his religion would have curbed an of his personal ambitions.

The Nteziryayo-Karemera tandem still remained until January 1989, and managed the most bounteous years of the Habyarimana regime, re-focused on its family and regional base, before they were confronted with growing social, economic and then political discontent. Whereas the disagreement between the two men came to light, Siméon Nteziryayo regained the plenitude of his former functions as Minister at the Presidency, whereas Édouard Karemera was sacrificed and "released to perform political functions".

However, the President, who had announced in his post-election policy speech in January 1989, that constitutional amendments were needed and that although multiparty politics was inevitable, he could not take the risk of letting Édouard Karemera take up leadership of an opposition in the South. He was thus appointed on 1 September, 1990, Chairman of the National Synthesis Committee, in charged of and drawing up a preliminary draft of the national political charter, which inspired the 10 June, 1991 Constitution.

By entrusting him with the management of the new National Committee responsible for reforming the party organs following the lodging of the Statutes of the renovated MNRD on 5 July 1991, the idea was then to keep him under his control and offer him a decisive position in terms of access to information and formulation of "recommendations" for the distribution of positions in the various spheres of power.

Édouard Karemera then reached the pinnacle of his political career: crowned with the prestige that always went with the title of leader of the former State Party - which, at the time, had still fetched huge material benefits, his prerogatives exceeded what accrued to Ministers and all senior officials in the political machinery. For a time, he thus imagined that his work would be compensated with an eminent position of national scope, but no such thing happened. As soon as he appeared as a leader capable of mustering an opposition force from the South, less ambitious representatives of the other Southern prefectures were promoted by the Presidency during the National Congress of April 1992.

Having been kept out of the corridors of official power, he set up a law business and the Presidency assured him of a income substantially higher than his government emoluments would have procured for him as a Consulting Barrister for large State-controlled (Bacar, Sorwal, etc.). It would not do for him to be forced to become a discontented "guy" and rally to the camp of people disillusioned with the regime.

During the July 1993 MRND Congress, he maneuvered more skillfully and by the end figured in the National Bureau on the platform of apparent heirs to succeed President Habyarimana. He reasserted his primacy in Kibuye by getting himself appointed a Member of Parliament for the prefecture on the list of MNRD representatives in the future Transitional National Assembly.

In late May 1994, when the probability of defeat could not be ruled out, he took over the (vacant) Ministry of the Interior and Communal Development and endeavored to restructure the civil self-defense. He then officially became Minister in charge of the genocide (*See § 7 below*). Arrested in Togo in June 1998 and transferred to the United Nations' detention center in Arusha the following month, he was ever since on trial.