

Annexe 94 : *The Initiators*, les promoteurs des massacres

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www.hrw.org/reports/1999/rwanda/Geno4-7-02.htm

The Initiators

Repris dans HRW-FIDH, *Aucun témoin ne doit survivre*, Paris, Karthala, 1999, p. 153-154.

« By April 6, hundreds of thousands of Rwandans counted themselves part of Hutu Power, but those who launched the genocide and slaughter of Hutu adversaries were few in number. The initiators appear to have included military officers like Bagosora and the commanders of the three elite units, Major Protais Mpiranya of the Presidential Guard, Major Francois-Xavier Nzuwonemye of the reconnaissance battalion, and Major Aloys Ntabakuze of the paracommando battalion, as well as Lt. Col. Léonard Nkundiye, formerly head of the Presidential Guards, Captain Gaspard Hategekimana, who oversaw the execution of the Prime minister, and Major Bernard Ntuyahaga, who apparently directed killings in the central residential area of Kigali and celebrated them afterwards in noisy parties at his home. Given the number of attacks that took place almost immediately in the northwestern prefecture of Gisenyi, Col. Anatole Nsengiyumva, the local commander, seems to have been among the first implementers of the killing plan. Col. Tharcisse Renzaho, a military man who was prefect of Kigali, quickly marshalled his administrative subordinates to organize the patrols and barriers needed to capture and kill Tutsi. He also maintained links with the militia who accorded him immediate obedience when he went around the city.

Some militia were out in the streets before dawn April 7 and others, identifiable as MRND and CDR members through their distinctive caps, were digging up buried weapons at daybreak.

The president and vice-president of the *Interahamwe*, Robert Kajuga and George Rutaganda, as well as the heads of the MRND and the CDR, Mathieu Ngirumpatse and Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, may have called them out. Ngirumpatse and other politicians, such as Froduald Karamira, Joseph Nzirorera, Edouard Karemera, Justin Mugenzi, and Donat Murego, put together the interim government at the request of Bagosora and hence were responsible for the composition of this group that put the state at the service of genocide. They also mobilized their followers, directly and by radio, to join in the killings.

Some members of the *akazu* appear to have played significant, but less public, roles. Witnesses present during the first two days after the plane crash claim that Mme Habyarimana was involved in political decisions, including the naming of Gatsinzi to the post of chief of staff of the army, an assertion which she has denied. The witnesses also declared that she and others followed events closely and that "...all the family that was there, including the religious sisters, rejoiced when they announced the death of one or another opponent. It was the Presidential Guards who announced that and they boasted about these murders." Madame Habyarimana was evacuated from Rwanda on April 9 by the French government. She may have continued to influence decisions from Paris, but it is unlikely that she was involved in detailed management of political affairs at that distance.

The activities of others close to the Habyarimana family should be investigated for possible links to killings. Michel Bagaragaza, the director of the Rwandan tea marketing office OCIR-Thé and linked to Mme. Habyarimana, was at home on April 6 and 7 near the parish of Rambura, supposedly to prepare for a family wedding. Rambura was the site of some of the first killings outside Kigali. Three priests at the parish were slain at dawn, followed soon after by three Belgian volunteers who worked at a school run by persons linked to the *akazu*, including Bagosora. During the days of large-scale slaughter, Colonel Rwagafilita, a member of the *akazu*, was frequently seen at the military camp in Kibungo. Soon after militia and military had massacred some 1,000 people at the St. Joseph Center at the

bishopric, a witness found Rwagafilita at the camp drinking beer with Cyasa Habimana, the local head of the *Interahamwe* who had led the attack, and the camp commander, Col. Anselme Nkuliye Kubona.

The first killers, like the first leaders, represented only a small part of the number who would finally be drawn into participation. In Kigali, where the violence was most concentrated, they included more than a thousand Presidential Guards along with several hundred troops from other elite battalions or from the National Police. The militia provided another 2,000.⁷¹ Outside the capital, assailants killed Tutsi at sites that were widely dispersed, but relatively few in number, perhaps some two dozen in the first day or two. The killers who responded to the initial call to slaughter probably numbered no more than 6,000 to 7,000 throughout the country.

For the first few days, it was not clear how many more of the hundreds of thousands who had been influenced by the ideas of Hutu Power were prepared to kill, rape, maim, burn, or pillage in its name. But by the middle of the following week, the initiators were assured of the support they needed to attempt the wholesale elimination of the Tutsi. »