

Box 11: From the improvised meeting of the High Command to the list of appointed members of the Crisis Committee (6-7 April 1994)

Without going into an in-depth debate about the nature and prerogatives of the «Crisis Committee», may we point out straight away that it is more accurate to qualify the meeting that was held in the Army Headquarters during the night of 6 to 7 April, as a meeting of the Armed Forces High Command, even though the participants spent quite some time discussing whether to call the organ a «Crisis Committee» or «Military Committee», its composition and goal. It was indeed an impromptu meeting by a spontaneously formed group with Officers serving in the Ministry of Defense the Army and Gendarmerie Headquarters. Officers had been informed by colleagues who had been already present or who had individually taken the initiative (and had the possibility) of going to the Army Headquarters during the night of 6 to 7 April. The numbers varied that night and several Officers only put in a short appearance to get news or receive instructions».

Among the members present or perceived at that informal meeting of the High-Command that night were:

- Major General Augustin Ndindiliyimana, Chief-of-Staff of the Gendarmerie (first to arrive on the scene)
- Colonel BEMS Théoneste Bagosora, retired, Director of Cabinet of the Minister of Defense
- Colonel Joseph Murasampongo (Hutu, Gitarama), G bureau of the Rwandan Army Headquarters
- Colonel BEM Balthazar Ndengeyinka (Hutu, Kibuye), Technical Adviser to the Minister of Defense
- Lieutenant-Colonel Emmanuel Kanyandekwe (Hutu, Ruhengeri), Signal Officer, posted to the G3, EM AR
- Lieutenant-Colonel Cyprien Kayumba (Hutu, Byumba), Finance Officer, Ministry of Defense
- Lieutenant-Colonel Jean-Bosco Ruhorahoza (Hutu, Byumba), serving in the G1, Rwandan Army Headquarters, secretary to the meeting
- Lieutenant-Colonel Ephrem Rwabalinda (Hutu, Cyangugu), Liaison Officer in UNAMIR
- Lieutenant-Colonel Augustin Rwamanywa (Hutu, Gikongoro), G 4, Army Headquarters
- Lieutenant-Colonel Paul Rwarakabije (Hutu, Ruhengeri), G3 EM GdN
- Lieutenant-Colonel Jean-Marie Vianney Ndahimana (Hutu, Kibuye), Commander of the AR Base in Kanombe, Kigali
- Major Gérard Ntamagezo (Hutu, Ruhengeri), serving in the G 2 EM AR, Duty Officer
- Major Théophile Gakara (Hutu, Byumba), GI Chief-of-Staff of the National Guard
- Major François-Xavier Nzuwonemeye (Hutu, Kigali), Commander of the Reconnaissance battalion
- Colonel Félicien Muberuka (Hutu, Kigali), Commander of the "Mayuya Camp" and Commander of Operations for Kigali-Ville

- Colonel Léonidas Rusatira (Hutu, Ruhengeri), Commander of the Higher Military Academy (*École supérieure militaire*)⁸¹

- Major Épiphan Hanyurwimana (Hutu, Byumba), Legal Adviser in the MINADEF, Secretary to the meeting (He only took the position early in the morning of the 7 April, thus succeeding to Colonel Ruhorahoza.

Among the personalities who came round during the night, we must still mention General Roméo Dallaire (Canadian), UNAMIR Force Commander and Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General, and Colonel Luc Marchal (Belgian), Commander of the UNAMIR Force, Kigali Sector.

It was precisely because of the disagreements between the members of the High Command, that a meeting open to the OPS and Unit Commanders was later held in the morning of 7 April at the ESM, to discuss modalities for setting up that Crisis Committee and define its role and prerogatives.

There were two opposed positions. The very large majority saw the "committee" as a temporary structure meant to secure the institutions until the interim authorities, under the authority of Agathe Uwilingiyimana, quickly put in place the transitional institutions. The second position, supported by Théoneste Bagosora and some other officers and endorsed by the leaders of the MRND, was to hand over power to the "committee" which would replace the multi-party government in place and negotiate a succession in the interests of politicians and northern military hierarchs.

The present meeting, some 50 to 60 officers, established and validated a list of 12 members of the High-Command to whom were to be added other Staff Officers, and upon recommendation of the meeting, were added the OPS Commander in Kigali⁸² and the prefect of Kigali Ville - whose presence was imperative on account of the specific duties incumbent on them in the maintenance of law and order in the capital city, as well as the Commanders of the ESM and ESO. The latter, Colonel Marcel Gatsinzi, had been appointed Chief-of-Staff *ad interim* during the night and only arrived in Kigali in the afternoon of 7 April. The "Crisis Committee" thus constituted met for the first time around 7 p.m. to elect its chairman, Major-General Augustin Ndindiliyimana. At the end of the exercise, the list of members of the Crisis Committee validated during the meeting of Officers in the morning was as follows:

- Major General Augustin Ndindiliyimana (Butare);
- Colonel BEMS Théoneste Bagosora (Gisenyi);
- Colonel BEM Marcel Gatsinzi (rural Kigali), appointed Chief-of-Staff AR *ad interim*;
- Colonel Léonidas Rusatira (Ruhengeri);
- Colonel BEM Balthazar Ndengeyinka (Kibuye);
- Colonel Félicien Muberuka (Kigali);
- Colonel IG Tharcisse Renzaho (Kibungo), prefect of Kigali City (PVK);
- Colonel Joseph Murasampongo (Gitarama);
- Lieutenant-Colonel Ephrem Rwabalinda (Cyangugu);

⁸¹ He was invited that night, after Théoneste Bagosora had left the residence of the Representative of the United Nations Secretary General, Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh. Colonel Léonidas Rusatira the longest-serving Officer after General Augustin Ndindiliyimana.

⁸² Let us point out that the latter noticing the disagreement between the officers and not caring much to confront Colonel Théoneste Bagosora, only made brief appearances.

- Lieutenant-Colonel Cyprien Kayumba (Byumba);
- Lieutenant-Colonel Paul Rwarakabije (Ruhengeri);
- Major Théophile Gakara (Byumba).

Most of those officers had participated in the discussions that night and «account was taken of regional balance to get all the *prefectures* represented», according to a present Colonel. Except for the scheduled meeting to elect its chairman, there was no other timetable of meetings jointly set nor was there any agenda for meetings, due to the personal strategies of some of its members. Furthermore, as shown in the unpublished minutes of various meetings (*see below*), no information or explanation was ever provided by the "decision makers" about the events that succeeded and convulsed the political framework, even though most of the Committee members could not travel and appreciate by themselves the situation in the city.

In all, the "Crisis Committee" could be deemed to have become operational from the time it was set up on Thursday 7 April in the morning to the formation of the Transitional Government on 8 April in the evening. Although some members sat continuously over the next two days, the only two real plenary meetings took place on the 7th in the evening to elect their chairman and on the 8th in the afternoon to «receive» the new Interim authorities. But paradoxically, during that second meeting, members of the Crisis Committee insisted on letting know that they were attending that meeting as observers to avoid the risk of being accused of trying to influence political decisions. As soon as the list of candidates for positions in the Government Council was endorsed around 9 or 10 p.m., General Augustin Ndindiliyimana announced that the mission of the Crisis Committee was ended. A last meeting was however held immediately afterwards with the UNAMIR Force Commander to exchange views on the politico-military situation (The RPF, attitude of the GP, murders of personalities, role of the Crisis Committee, etc.).