

Preparation of the genocide in Kibungo: the massacres committed against the Tutsi in 1961

CNLG, 29 juillet 2019



A research conducted by the National Commission for the Fight against Genocide (CNLG) on the history of genocide in the former Kibungo prefecture indicates that on September 25, 1961, when Rwanda was preparing for the referendum elections, PARMEHUTU created often, before the elections that took place from 23 to 28 August 1961, violence against Tutsi in Tutsi-dominated areas, such as Kibungo and Astrida. During this period, there had been tension in the Kibungo Territory for several weeks, which had led to violence against the Tutsi. This was sharply aggravated from August 25, 1961.

In a letter written by the UNAR National Committee to the Resident of Ruanda, it reads : “After the territories of Kibuye, Kigali, Nyanza, Gitarama and Astrida, the Territory of Kibungo is on the eve of the classic incidents who, for almost 2 years, bloody Ruanda. The Territory of Kibungo will shortly register 6th territory to suffer from terrorism, intimidation, unrest and killings.”

In the same letter, it says that since the arrival of the United Nations Commission on Rwandan soil, came to oversee these national elections which were

to be held in peace and quiet, the Tutsi were the victims of acts of violence, destruction and looting of their property and atrocities of all kinds.

In a letter to Administrator G. De Weerd alias Macumuyinda, the Tutsi of Nyarubuye commune had denounced their persecution in Nyarubuye commune by the Mayor and his Counselors.

In this letter, mention is made of the meeting of May 28, 196, at the Gituku Catholic Central, where Mayor Mpabanzi addressed the inhabitants of another Commune, saying : "Pursue the Tutsi girls wherever you find them at need to put them at the mercy of the soldiers!!! "

At one month and seven days of elections, the calm that the guardianship administration promises every day has not yet returned, but the troubles spread in the Territory of Kibungo, the only territory to date had not known the fires, looting and massacres that ravaged the whole country in the last 20 months.

Once again, the complicity of the Trusteeship Administration is manifested. The active part of its agents of all categories, the silent complicity of the main officials of the Administration of Ruanda are all evidence of its complicity. More than ever, the representatives of the Guardianship have joined forces with the PARMEHUTU party in the realization of this concerted plan of obliging the Rwandan populations, through violence, to join PARMEHUTU.

The implementation of this project was aimed at silencing or powerless activists and leaders of UNAR. The authorities also aimed at the physical suppression of the Unarists. In that part of Kibungo territory, on 1 August 1961, a meeting of the entire population was held at Rutonde in Rwamagana Commune, during which Mr. Isidore Sebazungu, Secretary of State for Defense, took the floor and declared openly "That we would remove the great militants of UNAR (mostly Tutsi) living in the region of Rwamagana to get through this damn party. He also said that if necessary he would use the army."

As the inhabitants of Kibungo Prefecture had the reputation of not engaging in killings against Tutsi, the authorities of this region plotted to assassinate Jean Népomuscène Kajangwe, Tutsi deputy of the PARMEHUTU party. In fact, the UNAR and the PARMEHUTU still made the show of arms. For example, members of the PARMEHUTU party plotted to assassinate the deputy Jean Népomuscène Kajangwe to provoke the wrath of the Hutu of Gisaka so that they kill the Tutsi.

In a report of 16 September 1961 concerning the events of the Southern Buganza of the Kibungo Territory and the assassination of the deputy Jean Népomuscène Kajangwe, the Territorial Principal Officer, Jean Dupuis said : "It should first be noted that for some time now time already the Bahutu were quite excited against the Batutsi." This shows that the authorities have done everything to sow discord among Rwandans.

In 1961, Jean Népomuscène Kajangwe and Isidore Sebazungu were PARMEHUTU deputies in Kibungo. Before becoming a deputy, to become sub-prefect, Jean Népomuscène Kajangwe had been head of the South Buganza before 1959.

The administrator of the territory of Kibungo, G. De Weerd, had first proposed to MP Jean Népomuscène Kajangwe to kill Isidore Sebazungu to raise the anger of Hutu against Tutsi, but the latter had refused. Faced with the

rejection of his proposal, G. De Weerd changed his strategy and made the same proposal to Isidore Sebazungu who welcomed him enthusiastically. They plotted to assassinate the deputy Jean Népomuscène Kajangwe.

Before 1961 Hutu did not kill Tutsis in this Kibungo Territory, but they looted their property. Administrator G. De Weerd was not at all pleased with the unity of the people of Kibungo, who lived together in peace. Then in a meeting in Gitarama, the administrator G. De Weerd, had proposed to kill all Tutsi leaders. Each time, the authorities sought an element of discord between Hutu and Tutsi. Thus they decided to kill the deputy Jean Népomuscène Kajangwe and to throw the responsibility of this crime on the Tutsi. After this assassination, most Hutu killed Tutsis.

The assassination of Jean Népomuscène Kajangwe, organized by the Secretary of State for Defense, Isidore Sebazungu and the Belgian administrator G. De Weerd, took place on September 12, 1961 and caused massacres against Tutsi, most of whom were killed or fled to neighbouring countries.

In the report concerning the events of the Southern Buganza of the Kibungo Territory, the Territorial Principal Officer, Jean Dupuis, talks about the assassination of the deputy Jean Népomuscène Kajangwe and gives an important element that shows that Colonel Guy Logiest and Colonel Naegel are sent to Kibungo to supervise the killings. In this report it is clear that massacres and violence began as soon as Colonels Guy Logiest and Naegel arrived.

This false information that the Tutsi killed MP Jean Népomuscène Kajangwe drove Hutu to kill Tutsi, starting with those who were at his godfather's place the same day : Joseph Karara, Rwamiheto, Munyagihe and Sebinyenzi. The latter lived in the same locality as the deputy Jean Népomuscène Kajangwe in Kitazigurwa.

Since 1959, when massacres against Tutsi had begun throughout the country, the deputy Jean Népomuscène Kajangwe was the first person who was killed in Kibungo on September 26, 1961. During this crisis period in 1961, it was the authorities and religious who led these massacres.

Following this assassination, the Tutsi were massacred in large numbers in this region ; some of them were even burned alive, locked in previously obstructed houses, others were killed with machetes or pierced by spears. This led to massive exile to neighbouring countries Burundi, Uganda and Tanzania.

A large number of Tutsis also fled to the Protestant Church of Gahini, but administrator G. De Weerd accused the church of hosting them.

Finally, a letter from Administrator G. De Weerd addressed to the Resident of Ruanda, shows the total number of refugees who were inside the country. It says that the total number of refugees at the expense of the Administration and accommodated in the various reception centres amounted, on October 20, 1961, to eleven thousand persons.