

Update: Arrested on 29th September 2002

Charge Sheet No.6
Colonel Tharcisse Renzaho
A Soldier in the DRC?



“Renzaho didn’t kill anyone with his own hands, but he was one of the main organizers of the genocide in Kigali. He was careful not to let everybody know his real position, but worked with people he trusted. He was crafty enough to realize that he had to cover his tracks.”

Vianney Munyangondo, a communal policeman in 1994.

This *Charge Sheet* details the accusations of involvement in the 1994 genocide against Colonel Tharcisse Renzaho, the former préfet (governor) of Kigali, Rwanda. *African Rights* is calling for his arrest and trial, arguing that the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), whose army he is known to have fought alongside, should assist in bringing him to justice. African Rights,

African Rights welcomes the progress in bringing the protracted and bloody conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to an end and in advancing dialogue within the country. There is no doubt that formidable obstacles remain on both fronts and that the Congolese people continue to endure unimaginable hardship. But there have also been gains politically and diplomatically which need to be reinforced and encouraged. Among the many difficult issues which have yet to be resolved effectively, is that of the Rwandese genocide suspects who remain in the DRC.

President Joseph Kabila's decision to hand over Rwandese rebels to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) in mid-September was commendable. However, the government emphasized that these rebels were neither members of the interahamwe nor soldiers of the former army, the Rwandese Armed Forces (ex-FAR), but refugees who had decided to engage the Government of Rwanda militarily. More recent news of a prospective hand over of interahamwe militia and ex-FAR soldiers, either to MONUC or to Rwanda, marks a step forward and it is to be hoped that this will urgently be realized.

Soldiers and interahamwe militiamen remain in government-held areas of the Congo and in regions controlled by rebel groups. Their presence was a major factor in sparking both the rebellion in 1997 and the second war, which began in 1998 and continues today. In recognition of this, President Joseph Kabila should sever all links with these forces, in particular the leaders. Although many of the rank and file soldiers and militiamen have been forced to return to Rwanda in recent months, their leaders—the men who planned, incited and led the 1994 genocide—continue to live in the DRC. As long as they are at liberty, and therefore able to use their lethal skills and experience to wreak havoc in the Great Lakes region, neither the DRC nor Rwanda, or their neighbours, will know peace.

Colonel Tharcisse Renzaho is one of a number of leading genocide suspects whose military expertise has been put to the use of the DRC government. By collaborating with efforts to find and prosecute Renzaho, it could begin to purge itself of the poison of genocide, and show commitment to the Lusaka Accords of July 1999, so contributing to a resolution of the conflict.

The agreement signed at Lusaka was the most wide-ranging attempt to bring the war in the DRC to an end and it offers the basis for dealing with the critical issues at its heart.¹ Taking into account the need to combat both the ideology of genocide and its practitioners, the agreement rules out an amnesty for Rwandese génocidaires. It obliges its signatories, which include the DRC government, to renounce co-operation with génocidaires and commit to bringing them to justice. The late President Laurent Kabila blatantly violated his promises in this regard, preferring to enlist dozens of the best-known military architects and implementers of the genocide to back the ailing Congolese Armed Forces (FAC). He re-armed and bolstered the ranks of the Hutu extremist fighters and sought to give them legitimacy, to the extent that even the allies of the DRC ended up associating with them.

It has long been known that senior military leaders of the 1994 genocide and prominent interahamwe militiamen have been fighting alongside the DRC government forces. Following the fall of Pweto in Katanga and other towns along the Zambia/DRC border in December 2000, many of the Congolese soldiers flooded into Zambia. With them were, almost certainly, some genocide suspects. The Government of Zambia gave the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) permission to begin a search “for genocide suspects and witnesses among the fleeing troops and civilians.” Col. Tharcisse Renzaho was one of the officers who led Congolese troops in Pweto, and who was said to have crossed over into Zambia, but he was not discovered at this time. Shortly afterwards, he left for the DRC and is now said to commute between Kinshasa and Lubumbashi.

Col. Renzaho was préfet of Kigali city during the genocide and a key figure in the slaughter that overwhelmed Rwanda between April and July 1994. The hills of Kigali are dotted with mass graves, with new discoveries all the time. The graves unearthed in Kigali prior to the commemoration of the genocide in April 2000 are a powerful testament to the legacy he left behind.

¹ For a wide-ranging discussion of the Lusaka Accords, and the views of the people of Kivu, see African Rights, *The Cycle of Conflict: Which Way Out in the Kivus?* 340 pages, December 2000.

After the defeat of the interim government responsible for the genocide, in July 1994, Renzaho lived and trained in the camps north of Goma, in North Kivu, while at the time same time keeping a foothold in Kenya. He fled North Kivu for Kenya in November 1996 when Rwanda and its allies closed the camps by force. There he maintained his links with the members of the ex-FAR and interahamwe still in Kivu and when, in 1997-98, they launched a bloody insurrection in northwest Rwanda he was an important source of military and organizational support for the insurgents. Renzaho returned to the DRC after the fallout between President Kabila and his Rwandese/Ugandan backers triggered the current war in the DRC. Because of the poor state of his own army, President Laurent Kabila became dependent on men like Renzaho who have brought considerable military experience and determination.

Even if Col. Renzaho has, in the meantime, left the DRC, given his prominence and its previous close ties with him, it should not prove difficult for the Congolese authorities to establish his country of refuge and to help the ICTR, provided the political will exists. We are publishing some of the evidence we have gathered about Col. Renzaho in the last seven years as part of the *Charge Sheet* series, which is aimed at supporting the work of the ICTR in identifying genocide perpetrators and bringing them to justice.

Several of the military officers and civilian officials who collaborated with Renzaho and who are mentioned in this report are already in the custody of the ICTR in Arusha, Tanzania—men like Col. Gratien Kabiligi³, who was in charge of security for Kigali. Many others who carried out Renzaho's instructions have been sentenced to death or life imprisonment in Rwanda or await trial. Other young men Renzaho recruited in Kivu are eking out a precarious and miserable existence in the forests of the DRC. Unwanted in the DRC and fearful of a return to Rwanda, they remain committed to a suicidal struggle they cannot hope to win, but which the region cannot afford. It is time that Col. Tharcisse Renzaho is himself finally brought to book.

Summary

Colonel Tharcisse Renzaho was appointed préfet of Kigali on 5 October 1990, four days after the RPF invasion of Rwanda. The timing of Col. Renzaho's appointment was an indication of the confidence President Juvénal Habyarimana had in him. The following day, Habyarimana's government staged a fake attack on the town of Kigali in order to create a pretext for the imprisonment of hundreds of Tutsis accused of collaborating with the RPF. Renzaho was among those responsible for the injustices of this period.

Known as an “engineer of war” for his talent in “sowing and halting disorder” in the words of a former policeman, Renzaho was capable of fuelling and harnessing the tensions of this period to the advantage of the government. Later, in the wake of the murder of President Habyarimana in a plane crash on 6 April 1994, Renzaho was one of the members of a “Crisis Committee” which took command. This committee installed the interim government responsible for implementing the 1994 genocide.

As the governor of the capital and a senior military officer, Renzaho was in an exceptionally powerful position at a definitive moment. In his capacity as préfet, he had control over the city's bourgmestres, councillors and the leaders of cellules known as *responsables*, as well as the police force. He had the authority to put up resistance to the policy of genocide, but instead he used his position to facilitate and reinforce the atrocities against Tutsis and leading Hutu opposition politicians.

The genocide in Kigali was comprehensive, systematic and extraordinarily swift. Well-organized killings of prominent Hutu political opponents and wholesale massacres of Tutsis took place there within a few hours of Habyarimana's death. The elite Presidential Guard, based in Kigali, was a leading force in the killings, especially in the early days. But the local civilian authorities were also at the forefront of carrying out the slaughter in Kigali. As well as Renzaho himself, there were a number of other notorious extremists whose role will not be forgotten. Certain women councillors,

³Gratien Kabiligi was promoted from colonel to brigadier-general on 8 April 1994. He later became deputy commander of the ex-FAR, with responsibility for the 1st Division based in Bukavu. He was arrested in Nairobi on 17 July 1997 and transferred to Arusha.

namely Odette Nyirabagenzi of sector Rugenge, Euphrasie Kamatamu, in charge of Muhima and Rose Karushara, responsible for Kimisagara,³ were particularly cruel. Renzaho did nothing to halt their genocidal activities although they came under his authority.

Kigali experienced the earliest and the last massacres of the genocide. The murder of individuals, families and communities of refugees sheltering in their homes, churches, schools, local government buildings, hospitals and mosques continued until the end of June. As defeat stared the architects of the genocide in the face, and as diplomats and journalists continued to arrive in the capital and report about events there, the forces of genocide redoubled their efforts to win the war, and to empty the city of survivors. It was the nature and scale of the killings in Kigali which convinced the outside world that a genocide had unfolded in Rwanda in April 1994.

Tutsis in Kigali were hostages to fortune: in a more direct fashion than elsewhere, their destiny was affected by the military outcome of the war between the ex-FAR and the RPF. The battle for Kigali was one neither side could afford to lose; this was the frontline and the place where the war was re-ignited. An RPF battalion had been based in Kigali since December 1993⁴; they broke out of their headquarters at about 4:00 p.m. on Thursday 7 April for a full-scale assault on government forces. There was no let up until the capital fell to the RPF on 4 July.

Renzaho remained in the capital for the duration of the fighting and his influence over the situation in the government-controlled areas was crucial. All the more so because, around 12 April, the interim government fled Kigali for Gitarama to escape the fighting, leaving Renzaho in unique circumstances. The administration of Kigali fell largely upon his shoulders, and the implementation of the policy of the genocide there depended upon his support.

Background

Col. Tharcisse Renzaho, 57, was born in Kigarama, Kibungo. After completing his training at the Ecole Supérieure Militaire (senior training school), Renzaho went to Hamburg, Germany, for further studies and training. He was a lieutenant-colonel prior to his appointment as préfet of Kigali. Confronted with the simultaneous challenge of the war with the RPF and domestic political unrest culminating in the establishment of new political parties in 1991, his tenure as préfet was marked by political intolerance. Despite the introduction of multipartyism, he openly pushed the interests of Habyarimana's ruling party, the National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development (MRND) and thwarted the new parties at every turn.

As soon as he took up the reins in October 1990, a large number of Tutsis, in particular the educated, businessmen, civil servants and priests were arrested. Most of them were detained for six months in terrible conditions. A number of the most prominent businessmen fled abroad. Their property in Kigali was seized and sold; a committee was set up to oversee this illegal sale. One of the beneficiaries was Renzaho. Vianney Munyangondo, a policeman, was one of his escorts.

He sold property belonging to Tutsis who had fled after they were intimidated. I was with him a lot of the time during that sale, and most of the property was taken by members of his own family.⁵

Another communal policeman, Emmanuel Gatera, said that he and his colleagues were sent to guard property left behind by these men, to ensure that they were not looted indiscriminately. He was sent to watch over a warehouse that belonged to Assinapol Rwigara.

The driver of Renzaho's yellow van used to come and take iron bars from Rwigara's depot. He said he had come on behalf of Renzaho, and added that he was taking the material for the house Renzaho was building at Kanombe.

³ For details about the role of these female councillors, see African Rights *Not So Innocent: When Women Become Killers*, pp. 109-143, August 1995.

⁴ The RPF deployed in Kigali in December 1993 in accordance with the Arusha Accords signed in August 1993 between the government and the RPF.

⁵ Interviewed 20 January 1999.

A number of vehicles were appropriated by Renzaho and kept at the office of the préfecture.

In August 1993, the Arusha Accords were signed, bringing the war to an end. In late October, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) arrived to oversee the implementation of the peace agreement. Nevertheless, there was considerable tension and violence in Kigali in late 1993 and early 1994. The negotiations to put together the broad-based government of transition laid down in Arusha were tense and ill-tempered; tit for tat murders of politicians and selected attacks against Tutsis became common. Many were forced to leave their homes and seek refuge elsewhere, including the Parish of Kicukiro and the monastery of the Josephite Brothers in Nyamirambo.

When this difficult situation exploded into genocide overnight, with the death of President Habyarimana, all the Tutsis of Kigali were at risk and most perished between April and June 1994. Renzaho was present throughout this period. But in June 1994, he became worried about the prospect of a defeat of the FAR and he evacuated his family to Zaire.⁶ Finally he too left, on 5 July.

In Zaire, Renzaho dedicated himself to the task of rebuilding the forces of genocide gathered in the refugee camps in northern Kivu. Sylvère Twahirwa from Mbogo in Greater Kigali was among them. He was a soldier in 1991 and joined the ex-FAR exodus to the camps in North Kivu in July 1994, settling in Kahindo camp in Rutchuru.

We ex-FAR from the camps of Kahindo, Katale and Kibuma were led by Col. [Paul] Rwarakabije⁷ and Col. Tharcisse Renzaho. Renzaho, who was often away in Kenya, had a residence in our camp, Kahindo. He had a yellow Nissan lorry which he rented out to one of the big international NGOs for transporting firewood to the refugees.

Co-ordinating the Genocide

The office of the préfecture in Kigali—Renzaho's office—was the nerve centre for the planning of the genocide in the city. It was the office where the broad outlines and the details of the policy of genocide were debated and decided, priorities drawn up and instructions delivered. Apart from the official meetings which he organized in his office, Renzaho also kept in close contact with the leaders of the interahamwe militia which included his own officials. The préfet oversaw the distribution of weapons to local government officials and civilians; visited roadblocks to sustain the militia's enthusiasm for murder; and encouraged civilians to participate in the killings by creating a civilian defence force. He also ensured that the genocide had committed leaders by replacing the officials who lacked the necessary zeal.

Col. Renzaho kept a firm grip on his officials. In the words of a young officer, Jean-Damascène Sekamana, "no councillor or bourgmestre could do anything without Renzaho being aware."⁸ This was true in a practical sense partly because of the extent of control assumed by the préfet under the emergency conditions. For instance, during the genocide, petrol stations in Kigali were divided up between the préfecture itself and army headquarters. While the army supplied soldiers, Renzaho's office provided petrol for local officials and the militia.

Defining the Task: Chairing the Meetings on "Security"

Col. Renzaho worked closely with both the civilian and the military authorities in Kigali. He was a member of the security council, along with military, police and judicial authorities, and chaired the meetings of the town council. The bourgmestres (mayors) for the three communes of Kigali—Nyarugenge, Kacyiru and Kicukiro—the numerous sector councillors and the *responsables* in charge of cellules all met with Renzaho in his office throughout the genocide. They were joined by the

⁶ Renzaho's family is now living in Lille, France.

⁷ Lt. Col. Paul Rwarakabije subsequently became head of the military camp of Katale in North Kivu and emerged as one of the leaders of the insurgents in northwest Rwanda. See African Rights, *Rwanda: The Insurgency in the Northwest*, September 1998.

⁸ Interviewed 7 August 2000.

representatives of the political parties and militia leaders. As is apparent from the statements of some participants, the decisions taken in these security meetings determined the manner in which the genocide was carried out on a day-to-day basis in Kigali. Renzaho gave his instructions to this regular gathering of men and women with influence in their communities. In this way, he ensured that decisions would be conveyed to the civilian population of Kigali and to the interahamwe through all the relevant chains of command.

Amri Karekezi was the councillor of sector Biryogo in Nyarugenge and took part in many meetings chaired by Renzaho during the genocide. He explained the organizational changes Renzaho made in April 1994.

In order to understand the préfet's role in the genocide, a distinction must be made between two important departments of the préfecture of Kigali; the security council and the town council. The security council normally consisted of:

- The préfet; the public prosecutor; the presiding judge of Kigali district court; a representative of the army, usually the commander of the locally stationed unit; a representative of the gendarmerie; the head of the immigration service; the head of the CID; the governor of Kigali central prison and the chief of police.

This council met and took all the decisions which were then channelled through the town council and down to the local government level to be implemented. The town council consisted of:

- The préfet, as chair;
- The three bourgmestres;
- The sector councillors.

Renzaho departed from the normal composition of these councils during the genocide. He increased the membership required by law, by inviting Kigali political party leaders on to the security council. It had a very rigid structure because its decisions were carried out automatically. The town council's composition was also changed, as the préfet added representatives from the political parties' youth wings.

Inviting politicians, and in particular key members of the political parties, helped Renzaho secure two essential goals. With their own political following and base, they had influence with the population and were the men best suited to carry out the critical task of propaganda and mobilization. Secondly, it was the "youth wings" of the political parties who provided the foot soldiers for the genocide.

At the first meeting held on Sunday 10 April, Renzaho gave his version of Habyarimana's death, drawing a number of ill-founded conclusions guaranteed to inflame anti-Tutsi sentiment. Karekezi attended the meeting.

The préfet gave a brief account of how the President had been assassinated by the *Inkotanyi* [RPF]. He went on to say that the Tutsis were this country's only enemies, and that they wanted to restore the monarchy in order to re-impose serfdom on the Hutus. He said we were now at war with these enemies of the nation. Then he thanked all the sectors which had "worked" hard, in other words those which had massacred their Tutsis.

Col. Gratién Kabiligi attended the second meeting, on 14 April, at which different subjects were reviewed in relation to the progress of the genocide, including the question of how best to handle the international reaction to the killings. Elie Dusabe remained councillor of Kacyiru until 21 May. He recalled that the main item on the agenda on 18 April was the need to clear Kigali of the corpses which lined the streets.

The préfet said: "All the councillors who have a lot of corpses in their districts should let us know so that we can give them vehicles to take away the bodies. There was only talk of the corpses spread throughout Kigali. We didn't speak of strategies to stop the massacres. They wanted to hide these corpses from the eyes of the international community."

Several leading politicians, who had been particularly active in the genocide, were invited to the meeting which took place on 7 May. The meeting was dominated, according to Karekezi, by a discussion of the achievements of the interahamwe.

That meeting too was chaired by Tharcisse Renzaho. Apart from the usual participants, those present included:

- Joseph Nzirorera, secretary-general of the MRND. He was a civilian but he wore army uniform that day. He is now in Arusha;
- Laurent Semanza, president of the MRND in Greater Kigali and the bourgmestre of Bicumbi commune. He also was in army uniform although he was a civilian. He is now detained in Arusha;
- Gratién Kabiligi who is also detained in Arusha.

Nzirorera took the floor and thanked the interahamwe for the excellent way in which they had carried out their mission in exterminating the Tutsis. He added: “To show how pleased I am, I’m giving you 100,000 francs.” The money was handed over there and then at the meeting. Swed Ndayitabi, vice-president of the interahamwe in Nyarugenge, received the money in person. Nzirorera promised the militia two minibuses to make it easier for them to get around. He asked the army to get the minibuses for them from Magerwa, the government stores. The vehicles arrived; one was given to the MRND and the other to the extremist CDR [Committee for the Defence of the Republic].

By the end of May, it was clear that Renzaho’s definition of “the enemy” had been understood and acted upon. With the demise of the Tutsis, he defined “security” in a broader fashion at the final meeting of the security council on 25 May. Grégoire Nyirimanzi, a tax inspector for Nyarugenge commune, was at that meeting. He had been appointed councillor of Nyakabanda sector by Renzaho on 14 April, by which time, he said, “quite a few people had already been killed.”

Renzaho mentioned the destruction of houses belonging to Tutsis who had been killed. Instead of being demolished, he said these houses should be given to Hutus displaced from the north who were in a camp in Nyacyonga.⁹

In addition to the regular meetings Renzaho held with local officials, meetings also took place in the office of the préfecture with well-known militia leaders. Claver Karegeya, a former soldier and reservist, worked as a communal policeman in Kigali.

The militia leaders who took part in Renzaho’s meetings included Robert Kajuga [head of the interahamwe at the national level], Setiba and Simbizi¹⁰ who lived in Biryogo. He met with them even though he knew that they were the ones killing people.¹¹

François Hategekimana was the *responsable* for cellule Gatare in Nyamirambo. He attended one of the meetings organized towards the end of the genocide where the préfet expressed concern at the “dimensions which the killings had taken.” Hategekimana pinpointed the nature of Renzaho’s worries.

Hutus who didn’t get along had begun to kill each other.

Putting the Right Men in Place

⁹ Interviewed 26 January 1999.

¹⁰ Stanislas Simbizi, a member of the national political bureau of the CDR, was and one of its leading propagandists. After the genocide, he helped to organize the insurgency in northwest Rwanda and wrote many of the insurgents’ tracts. He died in 1998.

¹¹ Interviewed 27 June 1998.

The speed and thorough nature of the genocide depended on ensuring that the men and women in positions of authority, both in the military and civilian administration, were fully committed to the policy of genocide. Those who wavered were swiftly dismissed, or worse. Early on, Col. Renzaho identified the local officials who were considered unreliable, either because they were Tutsi or Hutu members of the opposition, and took steps to put the right men in place. The communal policeman Vianney Munyangondo mentioned some of the men replaced by Renzaho.

Something which shows that Renzaho was a leading génocidaire is that, right at the beginning, just after Habyarimana's death, he replaced all the councillors and *responsables* who weren't in favour of genocide.

He replaced councillor Emmanuel Kandekwe with Grégoire Nyirimanzi who was an interahamwe. He also replaced the Nyamirambo councillor, Sezibera, by Germain Kaboyi, another génocidaire who was the chairperson of the CDR in Nyamirambo sector.

Jean-Baptiste Rudasingwa, councillor of sector Kagugu in commune Kacyiru, was dismissed because he is a Tutsi; he received the letter of dismissal while in hiding at the office of the préfecture.

When *African Rights* interviewed Jean-Baptiste Rudasingwa, he explained that because of previous threats, he fled as early as 7 April to the Pentecostalist church in Gasave where the pastor hid him in a wardrobe. Two days later, a friend used a Red Cross vehicle to evacuate him to the office of the préfecture. To trick the militia at the roadblocks, he was made to look like a corpse, covered with a blanket with only his feet visible. He was met by Renzaho when he descended from the car.

When the préfet saw me, he said: "You've just handed over your sector to the *Inkotanyi* and you dare to seek refuge here? Aren't you ashamed?" I didn't say anything.

A soldier he knew gave him the key to a toilet where he remained locked inside for two weeks, assisted by this soldier and another soldier. A week after his arrival, he met Renzaho.

He'd come to tell me that I had been suspended as councillor of sector Kagugu and that he'd given the letter of suspension to the bourgmestre, Pierre-Claver Nyilinkwaya.

Nyilinkwaya helped Rudasingwa reach the Parish of St. Michel where the parish priest kept him out of sight.¹²

Elie Dusabe, councillor of sector Kacyiru since 1989, took refuge in Taba, Gitarama on 21 May when he learned that Renzaho planned to have him replaced by a member of the CDR. Kandekwe was eventually evacuated by the RPF and died after the genocide. Sezibera was dismissed on 30 April and said he remained at home until he left for Zaire in early July.

Sending a Message: Releasing Murderers

Officials committed to the genocide showed their support in a number of ways. For instance, they generally refused to take action against militiamen who had been detained by local government officials or policemen for murder, violence or incitement. This confirmed to the militia that they had the backing of the authorities. When a notorious murderer nicknamed Kigingi was arrested, Renzaho immediately ordered his release. The bourgmestre of Nyarugenge, Jean Bizimana, said he had brought Kigingi's actions to Renzaho's attention shortly after the genocide began.

Renzaho didn't reply favourably when I suggested, in mid-April, that a well-known militiaman called Kigingi should be punished. One of those guarding the roadblock outside Nyamirambo stadium had just told me that Kigingi, who was a notorious killer, had murdered 24 people the night before. I told the préfet about it immediately and suggested Kigingi should be arrested and detained. However, the

¹² Interviewed 15 September 1998.

préfet chose to call him to his office for a little talking-to. After his interview with the préfet, Kigingi asked me: “Did you report me to the préfet thinking he’d do something about me?”

A few days later, the Nyamirambo councillor told me Kigingi was killing again. I didn’t know what I could do about him as he hadn’t even been worried last time.

If the préfet, a high-ranking army officer, had punished the prominent killers, fewer people would have been killed.¹³

Complaints that Kigingi was killing Hutus who he mistook for Tutsis led the councillor of Nyamirambo to raise the issue at a security meeting on 30 April. But as Karekezi related, the militiaman had the préfet’s full confidence.

The new councillor of Nyamirambo, Germain Kaboyi, raised the case of a CDR member known as Kigingi who was even killing Hutus who looked like Tutsis. The préfet immediately asked for Kigingi to be brought before him. Kaboyi said he couldn’t risk arresting Kigingi. People who had been at the meeting later told Kigingi that Renzaho wanted to see him. The next day, Kaboyi and I went to Renzaho’s office to get some petrol; we found Kigingi there. He too had come to get some petrol. Kigingi told the préfet: “I’ve come to get some petrol so that I can fight the Tutsis.” Renzaho immediately signed for him to have 40 litres free of charge. Kaboyi went up to the préfet and said to him: “There’s that Kigingi I told you about yesterday.” Renzaho replied: “I can see that this country is going to be run by gangsters, but I don’t know what to do about it.” I heard the préfet say that in my presence. Kigingi had other militiamen as bodyguards.

Renzaho’s failure to take action against Kigingi allowed him to continue with the genocide. Grégoire Nyirimanzi, the councillor of sector Nyakabanda, spoke of his involvement in an attack in May against Gisimba orphanage (see below).

The orphanage was attacked once and an employee was killed by an interahamwe nicknamed Kigingi whose real name was Habyarimana. We arrested Kigingi and took him to Renzaho as he’d said at a meeting that the killers should be brought before him. He detained Kigingi and I left. Kigingi was free again within the hour, at around 2.00 p.m.

After that, we arrested three militiamen: Sukari from Kabuguru and Ernest and Kiramuruzi from Nyakabanda. Again, Renzaho freed them within 30 minutes. The last two were killed by soldiers because they had killed their relatives.

Renzaho hardly mentioned the killing of Tutsis at the meetings he chaired, and then only towards the end of the meeting. And whenever leading génocidaires were brought before him, he freed them immediately. How could the interahamwe have become more important than state institutions, unless the senior authorities of the country were behind the genocide?

Kigingi went on to kill Tutsis through the month of June. On 10 June, the college of St. André in Nyamirambo, which, together with the Parish of St. André had already experienced a series of massacres in April and on 6 June, was attacked. About 170 refugees, many of them children, were killed. One of the priests at the college, Fr. Otto Mayer, spoke to the press shortly afterwards. He said that Kigingi had visited the parish and told them that he wanted to evacuate the refugees. Because they knew of his reputation as a fearsome militiaman, they took this as a subterfuge. Their fears came true when Kigingi returned, accompanied by other interahamwe. The priests refused to let them in, but they threw teargas to force the refugees out and then took them away in vehicles to be murdered.¹⁴

¹³ Interviewed 22 April 1999.

¹⁴ “A new massacre has left 170 victims in Kigali”, *Le Monde*, 14 June 1994.

Blocking Escape: Setting-Up Roadblocks

Roadblocks, manned by militiamen, were set up in Kigali within an hour of the plane crash, highlighting the extent to which the organization of the genocide was pre-planned and meticulous. Habyarimana's plane was shot down at about 8:30 p.m. According to the 1999 Report of the Independent Inquiry Into the Actions of the United Nations During the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda, "By 21.18, the Presidential Guard had set up the first of many roadblocks. Within hours, further roadblocks were set up by the Presidential Guards, the Interahamwe, sometimes members of the Rwandan army, and the gendarmerie."¹⁵ The haste with which roadblocks were established in Kigali suggests that an immediate aim was to paralyze UNAMIR by crippling its capacity to gather the intelligence required for a timely, well-informed and co-ordinated response by the UN and its member states. Secondly, setting up a huge number of roadblocks everywhere was the most effective way to close off escape routes for the opposition Hutu politicians and for the Tutsi community. Everyone was obliged to show an ID card. As cards at the time made a specific mention of the relevant ethnic group, showing a Tutsi ID card was tantamount to a death sentence. People without an ID card were presumed to be Tutsis too fearful of showing their cards. Anyone who was judged to "look" Tutsi was a candidate for death. Manned by armed militiamen who were frequently drunk, approaching a roadblock was a terrifying experience for them. In Kigali, as elsewhere, thousands of people were killed near the roadblocks, or abducted from there and murdered elsewhere, women were raped nearby, families were separated and money and valuables were confiscated.

For Jean-Damascène Ndayambaje, the sight of roadblocks on the evening of 6 April spelt the beginning of disaster. A Josephite Brother, Jean-Damascène was living with his congregation in Nyamirambo.

No sooner had we learnt of the plane crash than the préfet set up roadblocks throughout Kigali, preventing the free movement of individuals and of UNAMIR. Life stopped in Kigali.¹⁶

Aware of the importance of roadblocks to the success of the genocide, Renzaho included the issue on the agenda of the security meetings he chaired. Jean Bizimana, appointed by Renzaho as bourgmestre of commune Nyarugenge in April 1992, was a regular attendant.

At the security meetings which Renzaho organized and chaired at least once a week, we were urged to reinforce some roadblocks.

He spoke with the préfet after the 10 April meeting at which, he said, "Renzaho put me in charge of security." He described his duties.

This task involved trying to ensure there was no infiltration by the RPF and setting up and staffing roadblocks. The roadblocks in my commune were at Sopecya; at the roundabout at Celtar; at Rugunga and at the Milles Collines Hotel.

The roadblocks, he said, served their purpose.

Whenever I drove around town, I certainly noticed that people were being killed at these roadblocks.

Karekezi recalled that roadblocks featured in the préfet's first speech to the security council on the 10th.

The meeting on 10 April ended with a speech by Renzaho in which he underlined the fact that there were no longer separate youth wings attached to political parties. He said all Hutus should combine their forces to fight the Tutsis. The préfet then asked the sector councillors and the cellule *responsables* to set up roadblocks, cellule by cellule.

¹⁵ P.9 of the Report, issued on 15 December 1999.

¹⁶ Interviewed 6 December 1995.

He too noted the extent to which roadblocks facilitated the genocide in Kigali.

It was from that moment on that large-scale killings began in the various cellules of my sector.¹⁷

Making Weapons and Ammunition Available

Ensuring a steady flow of arms to militiamen and local officials was a critical element in Renzaho's role as the chief co-ordinator of the genocide in the city. He spoke about the availability of weapons during the first security meeting of 10 April. Euphrasie Kamatamu, councillor of sector Muhima since February 1990, listened as Renzaho told the participants where to go for arms.

[Referring to Habyarimana's death], Renzaho told us: "You see the disaster which has just shaken our country. Each one of you must come to pick up weapons." He told us that the guns should be distributed to those who knew how to use them well in order to guarantee the security of the sector. After the meeting, we went to army headquarters and each sector obtained five guns. We had to sign for them before taking them home.

When she returned to Muhima, Kamatamu said she met with the *responsables* of two of her cellules. In cellule Kabakene one of the guns was given to a well-known militiaman, "Matoroshi."

The people who received the guns had, like everyone else by then, begun guarding the roadblocks and going on night patrols. They returned to their roadblocks after obtaining these weapons.

Amri Karekezi underlined the fact that weapons had already been distributed to the hard-core before 10 April. The militiamen in his sector and other sectors—and representatives of the MRND, MDR and CDR—had begun to receive arms and ammunition on 8 April. The meeting on the 10th, he added, merely widened the net of armed civilians.

After the meeting of the 10th, we went to fetch the arms from the Ministry of Defence. I received five guns which I gave to the cellule *responsables* the following day.

Arms were again on offer at the security meeting of 18 April.

On 18 April, Renzaho again invited us to a meeting. When we arrived there, he told us: "Arms are now available." He then asked Major Emmanuel Nyamuhimba, Kigali's chief of police, and the sous-préfet, Jean-Baptiste Butera, who was in charge of judicial and administrative affairs, to accompany the councillors when they collected arms from the Ministry of Defence after the meeting.

The firearms used in Kigali during the genocide were also stockpiled in Renzaho's office. Local officials as well as interahamwe leaders visited the office of the préfecture on a regular basis to fetch weapons and ammunition for which they were required to sign a piece of paper.

Claver Karegeya saw the people who came to Renzaho's office for weapons and ammunition.

The guns which were kept in the office of the préfecture were distributed to the councillors and to the heads of the interahamwe. Major Emmanuel Nyamuhimba distributed them. Renzaho must have been aware that the guns were being given to the interahamwe.

Elie Dusabe confirmed that weapons were also distributed to the councillors from Renzaho's office itself.

The guns were kept in crates.

¹⁷ Interviewed 7 September 1998.

As weapons became more widely available for civilian use, and as an increasing number of FAR soldiers were needed for the war with the RPF, it became necessary to find a way to involve an even larger number of civilians in carrying out the genocide. The solution, Renzaho decided, was to create and arm a civilian defence force.

Creating a Cover for the Interahamwe: Training and Arming a Civilian Defence Force

International condemnation of the massacres added to the domestic pressures for the creation of a civilian defence force. After three weeks of relentless and graphic media coverage of the killings, the calls for an immediate halt to the slaughter were widespread and forceful. Renzaho summoned his most senior collaborators to a meeting on 30 April to discuss the most effective measures to continue the killing and disguise the truth from the outside world. Amri Karekezi was one of the participants.

The establishment of a civilian defence force was discussed at a meeting on 30 April. The international community had continued to denounce the massacre of innocent people in Rwanda. Col. Gratien Kabiligi was there as he was in charge of security for the city of Kigali. We were told that they had decided to set up a civilian defence force as a cover for the interahamwe. The others at the meeting said: “Instead of talking about the interahamwe militia, we’ll talk about civilian defence volunteers.” This force was to involve all the youth wings of the political parties, and to come under the authority of Major Bivamvagara. He had a lieutenant as his deputy. The councillors were asked to draw up lists of young people to join the force. We were told to recruit only Hutus. We had to recruit at least 150 people per sector.

Elie Dusabe explained how the establishment of the force sought to meet Renzaho’s two main objectives.

Renzaho did not call on the population in a clear manner to kill each other. But he created a “civilian defence” responsible for tracking the “enemy.” The préfet did not say who constituted the enemy. The interahamwe militia automatically understood that the enemy was every Tutsi. Renzaho said that the enemy was everyone who didn’t have an identity card or who had hidden it. It is this civilian defence force which was responsible for killing Tutsi civilians since the préfet saw that the ex-FAR soldiers had to fight the RPF and that the number of ex-FAR was diminishing.

After this meeting the Hutu population became really hostile to their Tutsi neighbours, asking them, for the first time, to show their ID cards even though they had known each for a very long time. The Tutsis were afraid of showing their ID cards. The militia took advantage of this to label them *Inyenzi-Inkotanyi* and consequently to deliver them to their death.

Several sites were used as training grounds: the sports stadium in Nyamirambo; *the cercle sportif* of Kigali in Rugunga; the home of Stanislas Simbizi in Biryogo and the primary school of Kivugiza. A former soldier was put in charge of each site. Major Bivamvagara and his deputy were responsible for co-ordination.

The people Karekezi recruited in his sector of Biryogo were, as intended, militiamen. Karekezi’s escort, Albert Lavie, had been a communal policeman since 1990. During the genocide, he went nearly every day to the office of the préfecture. He said that: “Karekezi participated in a lot of meetings with the préfet.”

One day Renzaho telephoned Karekezi to tell him that guns were available. He asked him to come and fetch them. The government had decided that the civilian population should be given responsibility for its own defence. The guns had come from the Ministry of Defence. Karekezi and I went to the office of the préfecture to recuperate these weapons. It had been decided that each sector would obtain 6 guns—Kalachnikovs, R4s etc... When we returned to Biryogo, the councillor gave them out to his militiamen who had already been trained.

Célestin Sezibera, the councillor of sector Nyamirambo, listened to the préfet in the meetings where he explained that the civilian defence force, the patrols and the roadblocks were interdependent aspects of a coherent, central policy. He recalled Renzaho's response when he was asked the reason for the creation of civilian defence units.

He told us that the 600 RPA soldiers at the CND building had broken out of their base and had become uncontrollable.

Some days later, Renzaho invited us to come and pick up the guns. I got ten guns. The people in my area already had a lot of guns. Some had obtained them from political parties or from friends who were soldiers.

Vianney Munyangondo spelt out the objectives of the civilian defence force.

Renzaho armed the civilian population in order to have the Tutsis massacred more quickly. Major Bivamvagara worked closely with Renzaho. There were three objective reasons for creating the civilian defence:

- To kill the Tutsis at the roadblocks;
- To attack and kill the Tutsis in their homes;
- To fight the RPF at the front.

Col. Gratien Kabiligi would come and take the young people who had just been given rudimentary military training in Kigali regional stadium.

After a crash course, some of the new trainees were left to man roadblocks.

At one meeting, the councillors asked for guns, saying there should be someone with a gun at each roadblock because there were so many *Inyenzi*. The only thing roadblocks achieved was to make it possible for Tutsis to be tortured and killed. The councillors received their guns at the Ministry of Defence.

The speed with which young civilians were being recruited and killed reached a point towards the end that "even Renzaho couldn't handle it", said Vianney Munyangondo.

At the end of June, Col. Kabiligi came to the office of the préfecture and said he needed 2,000 people. Renzaho was furious and replied: "You want the young people, do you? You've killed them all. Where do you think I can find you any more of them?"

Everyone was shocked at what Renzaho had said. Civilian defence representatives were there, as well as some soldiers. I was there myself and I heard him. After that, the interahamwe were less sure of themselves. That showed me that, if he had wanted to, Renzaho could have saved a lot of people from the very beginning. But he did not do so. Instead of stopping the massacres, he organized them.

Bizimana said that "Renzaho collaborated closely with the Ministry of Defence and the army headquarters" during the genocide. He emphasized Renzaho's personal commitment to the success of the policy.

Renzaho held meetings to encourage people to reinforce the civilian defence. Former soldiers were called out by the préfet and given responsibility for recruiting young people, for training them and for distributing arms to them. The recruitment took place at the office of the préfecture itself. The Ministry of Defence also recruited young people who were supposed to fight at the front, but these two processes of recruitment were completely different.

The new system, he said, was meant as a back-up to roadblocks.

I used to accompany Bivamvagara often when he went to the different sites. I went to see how he distributed the weapons. Everywhere we went, Major Bivamvagara left two or three guns at the roadblocks. Elsewhere, he left the weapons with those in charge of the training at the sites. The civilian

defence system was intended to reinforce the roadblocks, to increase their manpower in order to ensure a tight control over identity cards and passengers.

Grégoire Nyirimanzi sent his recruits to Nyamirambo stadium for training by Bivamvagara.

Bivamvagara had to give a report back on the training to the préfet of Kigali.

Jean-Damascène Sekamana was a sub-lieutenant in the FAR.

The leaders of the interahamwe were well-armed, thanks to the creation of the civilian defence in which the préfet played an important role. Renzaho was responsible for setting up this well-known organization which armed the militia.

Laying a Trap

Creating an illusion of security was a tactic used by Renzaho throughout April as a means of flushing Tutsis out of their hideouts and of discouraging the Hutu population from sheltering them. This was the prelude to the death of countless people. A few days after the genocide began, Renzaho spoke on Radio Rwanda to inform the population that the killings had been brought to an end and urged those in hiding to return to their homes. To implement Renzaho's appeal, local government officials called meetings at the cellule level.

Misleading the population through false promises of protection continued beyond April. Euphrasie Kamatamu said that in early May, Renzaho sent letters to the councillors asking them to halt the massacres. By then most of the large-scale massacres had taken place throughout the country; a few pockets in Kigali where refugees were guarded by UNAMIR soldiers were rare exceptions.¹⁸ But according to councillor Kamatamu, Renzaho's letter did not put an end to the killings in her sector of Muhima.

The interahamwe continued to abduct people in a clandestine manner, especially during the night. They continued to kill during the day as well, but secretly.

What the préfet's letter did was to make people come out of their hiding places to be killed. Renzaho did nothing to stop the massacres. He could have, for example, called in soldiers to come and stop the killings.

The Communal Policemen Lured to their Deaths

Renzaho's statement about peace encouraged several Tutsis who worked for him as communal policemen to leave their homes and hideouts. The men, who included Etienne Bikorimana, alias "Guinness"; Flodouard Sezirahiga; Appolinaire Bisangwa; Kayijuka and Makaka, were summoned to Renzaho's office. Their colleague, Albert Lavie, said that their anxieties were eased by the messages they received from Renzaho.

They were afraid to leave their homes because they were very much under threat. The préfet told the councillors of the sectors where these people lived to oblige them to come to the office of the préfecture.

When they arrived at Renzaho's office, they and nine Hutu policemen who were not considered well-trained, had their guns confiscated by the head of the communal police force, under Renzaho's directions, said Vianney Munyangondo.

Major Emmanuel Nyamuhimba collected their guns on Renzaho's orders as he was our immediate boss.

¹⁸ The other major exception was Bisesero in Kibuye where huge massacres took place in May/June 1994. For details see African Rights, *Resisting Genocide: Bisesero, April-June 1994*, Witness to Genocide, No.8, April 1998.

With no means of defending themselves, the men opted to remain at the office of the préfecture for fear that soldiers would mistake them for the RPF if they saw them in uniform. After a week, Renzaho was determined to force them out. Emmanuel Gatera, who had joined the service in January 1987, is one of the Hutu policeman who was deprived of his gun.

Renzaho put up a list, signed by him, of all the policemen “who were no longer part of the police force of the préfecture of the city of Kigali.” All the names were those of Tutsis. No Tutsi had been forgotten. This list was posted in the office of bodyguards. These men knew they could not take the risk of going into town in police uniform carrying no weapons, so they stayed. When, two days later, Renzaho learned that they were still there, Renzaho personally came to the area where trucks were parked, where we were with the Tutsis, and told them to “get out, to go away.” Sezirahiga, one of the most experienced in the service, said to him: “We’ve worked for you for a long time and this is how you are chasing us out, with no weapons, knowing full well that without arms we cannot even reach the [nearby] Parish of Ste. Famille?”

Shamefaced, a few minutes later, probably by telephone, Renzaho invited a priest from the Parish of St. Michel, to come and fetch these policemen and to keep them at the parish. Some days later, when the priest realized the growing insecurity in his parish, he took them to St. Paul’s.

Claver Karegeya recalled the reason given for their dismissal.

Major Nyamuhimba suggested that the préfet fire them. The list of dismissals had been signed by Renzaho himself. All the Tutsi policemen were mentioned in this list. The reason given for getting rid of them was that they had refused to stand guard without guns.

The policemen did not live for long. After Renzaho broadcast an announcement on Radio Rwanda saying that calm had been restored, they returned to their homes. Gatera said that “the calm only lasted for one day.”

The killings started the next day, very early in the morning. Bisangwa was killed in Kimisagara by a militiaman; Sezirahiga was killed in the same sector by a soldier who was a member of the Huye battalion stationed at Mount Kigali and the others died in their homes in Rugenge.

As for the nine of us Hutus whose guns had also been taken, we returned to our homes.

Martin Kayiranga was a civil servant who worked under Renzaho.

They wouldn’t have been killed if he’d kept them at the office of the préfecture because the militiamen feared him and took him as their boss.

Implementing the Genocide: Systematic Massacres

A huge number of large-scale massacres were organized in Kigali between 7 April and 4 July 1994—in parishes, mosques, schools, hospitals and local government buildings. Massacres took place at the mosque in Nyamirambo on 11-12 April; at the Ecole Technique Officiel at Kacyiru and at Nyanza on the 11th; at the college of St. André in Nyamirambo between 8-13 April and again on 10 June; at the Centre for the Study of African Languages (CELA) in Rugenge on 22 April; at the Young Catholic Workers’ Association (JOC), also in Rugenge, on 24 April. The earliest massacre in Kigali, and maybe in the country, took place at the Jesuit Centre Christus in Remera early on the morning of 7 April. Kigali also continued to suffer large-scale massacres as late as mid-June, for example at the Parish of Ste. Famille and at Saint Paul’s Centre. While Renzaho ultimately bears significant responsibility for each one of these massacres, he was not always physically present, and nor did the soldiers and militiamen always come with his written instructions and approval. There are, however, a number of massacres which he personally supervised and where he watched as men and boys were taken away to be murdered, or where he set the scene for the slaughter by giving the green light to the interahamwe. A hallmark of the massacres Renzaho directed in person was that men and boys, in particular the educated and wealthy, were systematically selected for death.

In a few instances, Renzaho did intervene to prevent massacres, apparently in order to try to manipulate the international media. The men who worked closely with Renzaho throughout the genocide have no doubt that Renzaho could have prevented many more. Amri Karekezi spoke of the refugees who were allowed to live because Renzaho wanted to use their survival to deflect international criticism.

If Renzaho had wanted to stop the massacres, he could've done so throughout Kigali préfecture. For example, in the town council, Renzaho explicitly forbade the interahamwe and the soldiers from killing the people who had taken refuge at Milles Collines Hotel, at Saint Paul's and at the Tanzanian embassy. Once he said so, not one militiaman attacked the people at those places. The préfet said we could use those people to defend ourselves against the international media which had continued to condemn the massacres in Rwanda. It was not until the RPA soldiers raided St. Paul's that the préfet authorized the militia to go and kill people at the Parish of Ste. Famille.

The bourgmestre of Nyarugenge remembered an occasion when he and the préfet intervened to save lives.

When the militia wanted to kill a contingent of refugees who were being sent from the Milles Collines Hotel to the RPF zone by UNAMIR, the préfet and I rescued them and took them back to the hotel.

Such examples are rare. Most of the time Renzaho either arranged the killings in person or stood back to allow them to continue.

“Die Without Clapping Your Hands”: CELA, 22 April

About 40 Tutsi men and boys were abducted on 22 April from CELA, a language school attached to a missionary centre located in Rugenge, close to the Parish of Ste. Famille and the Pastoral Centre of St. Paul. Col. Renzaho escorted the militiamen to the centre and stayed until the men were taken away to be murdered. Renzaho was accompanied by the bourgmestre of Nyarugenge¹⁹ and Fr. Wenceslas Munyeshyaka, the priest in charge of the neighbouring Parish of Ste. Famille.²⁰ The massacre had been well planned. Fr. Munyeshyaka visited CELA on the night of 21 April to warn the Hutu watchmen who slipped away very early on the morning of the 22nd.

Several hundred refugees had gathered at CELA; many had been there since 7 or 8 April. After the foreign missionaries were evacuated, on or around 12 April, the women and children squeezed into the chapel and the men stayed outside, doing their best to ensure the refugees' security. Disaster struck on 22 April. Joseph Bitega, a builder, was one of the men the refugees had chosen to organize them.

A lot of militiamen and soldiers arrived. They were well armed and the préfet, Renzaho, was with them.

The militia claimed that the refugees themselves had weapons which they intended to use against the Hutu population. They stopped at the entrance and asked a watchman to summon the person in charge of the refugees. Joseph came out to speak to them.

I saw a lot of génocidaires there. Renzaho asked who the people with me were. I told him that they were people who had been threatened in their homes and that they had their identity cards. The génocidaires shouted out that I was lying and that I was with the accomplices of the RPF. They said that we had arms to kill the Hutus. The préfet said that the accomplices had to be hunted down but that

¹⁹ In an interview with *African Rights*, Bizimana claimed that he and the préfet reached CELA *after* the militia had killed the men and that they “condemned the killings through speeches promoting peace.”

²⁰ For details about the role of Fr. Munyeshyaka in the genocide, See *African Rights*, *Fr. Wenceslas Munyeshyaka: In the Eyes of the Survivors of Ste. Famille*, Witness to Genocide, Issue 9, April 1999 and *Backwards and Forwards: The Struggle for Justice; Father Wenceslas Munyeshyaka Arrested and Released in France*, Witness to Genocide, Issue I, October 1995.

they had to be organized about it. That is why some of the militiamen and soldiers went into CELA and others surrounded the area. When they were inside they told the refugees to come out and they checked their identity cards. They took the men to one side and they told the women to go back home.

Bernadette Kanzayire, a lawyer, watched as Renzaho decided the men's fate.

Renzaho told us that these men were going to be interrogated and issued orders to the militia to do as they wished with the *Inyenzi* amongst them.²¹

Joseph was one of the 40 men and boys—mainly educated men and students—told to board a waiting minibus and van.

We were taken to the police detention centre in Muhima. A few minutes later, we were taken to Rugenge sector office to be killed. People were taken one at a time and then shot. I ran off after two people had been killed. The militiamen shot at me but I escaped and, with luck, I got to St. Paul's.²²

The women and girls who watched their husbands, fathers and brothers led away to certain death have no doubt who was responsible. Concilia Mukamwezi, an employee of Rwandatel, commented:

These young boys and men were sent to their deaths by the préfet, Tharcisse Renzaho, backed by several militiamen. He loaded them into a minibus and drove them towards the slaughterhouse.

The refugees left behind were told to clap for Renzaho which then infuriated him. Placidia Mukabyagaju, a teenager at the time, remembered his words to them: "Die without clapping your hands."

The Cover of Darkness: The Lycée Cîteaux Notre Dame, 30 April

The Lycée Cîteaux Notre Dame, in sector Rugenge, is a secondary school located next to the Catholic convent of the Bernadine nuns. Many of the teachers and their families lived in residential quarters close to the school. On 7 April, armed interahamwe, backed by four soldiers, descended upon the school. The teachers and their relatives, both Hutus and Tutsis, headed for the convent to elude the gunfire. The armed men followed them, but were held back by three gendarmes guarding a house nearby who shot two soldiers and two militiamen. Shortly afterwards, the Belgian nuns were evacuated by French soldiers and the Hutu refugees, aware that they were not the target of the violence, returned to their homes or left for their communes of origin. This left the Tutsi refugees exposed.

All the refugees singled out Lt. Pierre Nsabimana as the officer who came on a regular basis to terrorize them, accusing them of collaborating with the RPF. Lt. Nsabimana was in charge of operations in the area. On the 29th, Ghanaian soldiers with UNAMIR spoke with the refugees and promised to return the following day and to remain with them. After their departure, Lt Nsabimana arrived, in a furious mood.

Emma-Marie Uhoracyeye, who worked at the Lycée, heard him as he explained the purpose of his visit.

He had a register in his hand, which he told us to fill in. We had to make a list of the names, the ages, the level of education and the sex of everyone. He explained that Renzaho, the préfet, had asked for it to be filled out so he could look for assistance.

She recalled another gesture on the part of the préfet that was intended to reassure the refugees.

²¹ Interviewed 9 June 1999.

²² Interviewed 4 June 1998.

Renzaho had just sent us two Tutsis who had sought refuge with him, telling them that they would find security at the Lycée.

Pierre-Canisius Kagabo, a bank employee, had left his home in Biryogo a week before the genocide to stay with a friend who taught at the Lycée.

Soldiers used to come to see us all the time, and some of them threatened us with death. Others had lists on which they wrote our names, ages, sex, and educational qualifications. They told us that these lists were being compiled on behalf of Col. Tharcisse Renzaho, the préfet. The préfet put forward the argument that the lists would make it easier for him to seek assistance for us. We wondered how the sex and educational qualifications of the refugees could have any connection with food requirements.

As promised, the Ghanaian soldiers arrived on the morning of the 30th, at about 10:00 a.m. but were refused entry by Lt. Nsabimana and one of the nuns in charge. Lt. Nsabimana later left the Lycée but returned in the afternoon, together with three other soldiers; this time they stayed until 5:00 p.m. Then, at 7:30 p.m., Lt. Nsabimana came back with the same three soldiers, and a fourth soldier, just as the refugees were sitting down to eat. Three of the soldiers came inside the convent; one positioned himself ready to shoot while a colleague ordered the refugees to congregate at the entrance. He then ordered the men to separate from the women and children, said Emma, and led them outside.

He watched the women and the children, then said: "Why are you afraid?" No-one replied. He turned back to the men and told them to get up. Then he signalled them to move forward towards the door. We watched them for the last time. The soldiers followed them; we remained seated. Nobody moved. We were waiting to die. Everyone knew that escape was impossible; the militia had set up roadblocks every 50 metres, and in every direction.

Then we heard gunshots. They had killed the men who were with us.²³

The soldiers had captured 15 men and boys and shot them on the street, not far from the convent. Two men, Pierre-Canisius and Erneste Gatsimbanyi, sneaked out after they bribed one of the soldiers. Erneste, a businessman, lived in sector Cyahafi and had arrived at the school on the 8th.

On 30 April at around 7:30 p.m., the préfet sent Lt. Pierre Nsabimana and his soldiers to kill us. The soldiers told the men to form a line and to come out. Canisius and I were at the back. A soldier asked us, in a low voice, for money to save us. I gave him 9300 francs which I had in my pocket, and Canisius gave him 4500. Then the soldier asked us to go back.²⁴

With the selection of educated males, Pierre-Canisius understood the aim of Renzaho's list.

Based on the lists he had established, the préfet sent soldiers on 30 April to kill us, beginning with the adult males. This was the purpose that lay behind the list. These soldiers drove us onto the tarmac road at around 7:00 p. m. on 30 April. Thanks to God and the darkness, I was able to escape and return to the refuge.²⁵

Most of the victims were teachers, but they included an employee of the American embassy and two students whose father, Justin Nsabimana, taught at the Lycée.

Also on the 30th, there was another attempt to lure educated male refugees hiding at the centre of the Josephite Brothers in Nyamirambo, where many people had already been killed on 12 April. In despair, Brother Damascène Ndayambaje said they considered sending an appeal to Renzaho.

We begged Father Blanchard and Brother Cyrille to petition Renzaho on our behalf to allow us to move to another area where we could be safe. On 30 April, Renzaho sent round his sous-préfet with a set of forms on which he wanted us to list all the refugees in our community, giving their family and first names, gender, age and profession. Before we filled the forms in, we asked Fr. Blanchard for

²³ Interviewed 11 November 1995.

²⁴ Interviewed 13 November 1995.

²⁵ Interviewed 28 November 1995.

advice. He discouraged us from filling out the forms. He told us that the very night we had been given our forms, the college professors had been murdered at the Notre Dame des Cîteaux college by soldiers sent by préfet Renzaho after they had duly filled in the forms.

The sous-préfet came frequently to collect the list, but we consistently refused to give it to him.

A Seal of Approval: Abductions at Saint Paul's Pastoral Centre, 14 June

The Pastoral Centre of Saint Paul's in Rugenge was a refuge for nearly 2000 Tutsis. Fr. Célestin Hakizimana, the priest in charge of the centre, welcomed them and used every subterfuge to help them stay alive and to keep up their spirits. Fr. Hakizimana looked to the préfet for help.

Renzaho refused to help us on more than one occasion. The first time, Fr. Paulin Munyazikwiye, who knew Renzaho from the time he was a student, phoned him because we were under attack and in need of his assistance. I was standing next to Fr. Paulin. Renzaho just played with words without giving us anything more substantial.

Another time, we were on the receiving end of a full-scale assault. I phoned Renzaho myself to ask him for help. He repeated the exact same words: "What do these people want? We tried to stop them." I told him that despite these appeasing speeches, the killings carried on. Furiously, he replied: "What do you want me to do about it?" And he immediately put the receiver down, cutting the line of communication. From then on I didn't dare ask Renzaho for assistance.

On 14 June, Renzaho visited the centre. Elie Mpayimana, a journalist, was among the refugees in the compound. "That day we had a visit from Col. Renzaho in a military jeep." They were also invaded by dozens of militiamen "carrying machetes, hoes, guns, *massues*, grenades and all sorts of other weapons."

They were shouting and screaming non-stop, creating a general panic among the refugees. They had a list with the names of some of the refugees. Their leaders were Odette, Angéline²⁶ and the bourgmestre.

In an effort to contain the militiamen swarming around, and who insisted that the priest hand over the refugees, Fr. Hakizimana sought an arrangement that he hoped would keep them at bay.

Because of the relentless aggression of the interahamwe who were intent on abducting the Tutsis, in order to slaughter them, I organized a meeting with the bourgmestre, Bizimana; the councillor, Odette Nyirabagenzi, and others. We agreed that none of the militia groups would, from then on, be able to abduct any refugee without giving us, the people responsible for St. Paul's, an authorization signed by the bourgmestre or the préfet.

On the morning of 14 June, I saw a militiaman coming with lists of people he wanted to take away. The lists were signed by Euphrasie Kamatamu, the councillor of Muhima, and Odette, the councillor of Rugenge. I asked him why he had not respected the procedure we had decided upon, with regard to the official authorization of the préfet or bourgmestre. He then returned to his group and came back after a while with a new leader named Lt. Iradukanda. He handed me a note from the bourgmestre, together with the lists authorizing that the people concerned should be brought to the police station for interrogation. The note was signed by the bourgmestre, but in the name of préfet Tharcisse Renzaho. Renzaho's name was very clear, with the seal of the préfecture of the city of Kigali, not that of the commune.

Afraid of the panic that would seize the refugees if they saw a large group of soldiers and militiamen, Fr. Hakizimana insisted that only Lt. Iradukanda and a small group of his men enter the premises. The priest had already warned the wanted men, when he had first read the list, and had given them secure hiding places. So none of them came forward when their names were called out. Undeterred, the militiamen were determined to take some men and boys away. As acknowledged by

²⁶ Angéline Mukandutiye, an inspector of primary schools in commune Nyarugenge, was one of the best known génocidaires in Kigali. For details, see *Not So Innocent*, pp.196-206.

many survivors, Fr. Hakizimana risked his life to put up a strong protest, but to no avail. Father Hakizimana watched helplessly as the victims were picked off.

Outraged, the militia decided to take people at random. They picked out many people. The lieutenant pretended it was out of his hands, saying: “The militia want to take anyone instead of searching for those named on our assignment. For my part, I can do nothing. I’m leaving.” He left me with the militia dragging people out indiscriminately to be taken away. The militia took more than 40 people. I learnt afterwards that these people were killed in Rugenge sector.

But Renzaho had not finished with St. Paul’s. He came a few days later to tell the remaining refugees that the evacuations by UNAMIR²⁷, which had been temporarily halted, were to restart. He asked for the names of those who wanted to be evacuated. The refugees did not respond because, said Fr. Hakizimana, they had been warned by interpreters working with UNAMIR that Renzaho “wanted to know the names of those still alive in order to have them killed.”

Giving the Green Light to the Interahamwe: The Parish of Ste. Famille, 17 June

The Catholic Parish of Ste. Famille in Rugenge received hundreds of refugees from all over the city, but particularly from Rugenge sector. When the priest in charge of the parish went into hiding, Fr. Wenceslas Munyeshyaka took over responsibility. The collaboration between Fr. Munyeshyaka; Col. Renzaho; the councillors Odette Nyirabagenzi and Euphrasie Kamatamu; Angéline Mukandutiye and various militiamen made life for the refugees dangerous and miserable, and facilitated several massacres at the parish.

On the night of 16/17 June, after the massacre of 14 June at St. Paul’s, the RPF carried out a successful operation to rescue the refugees at St. Paul’s, enabling more than 1,600 refugees to reach Kabuga in Greater Kigali. Furious, Renzaho visited Ste. Famille on the 17th. Shortly after his visit the interahamwe arrived to punish the remaining refugees. They killed 68 men and boys and two women.

Jimi Rutaganda, a taxi driver from sector Biryogo, described Renzaho as a man “stained with blood.”

Tharcisse Renzaho is the one who gave the green light to all the interahamwe. He collaborated closely with Munyeshyaka. They were always together when Renzaho came to Ste. Famille to observe the conditions in which we were living. Renzaho used to laugh a lot at Ste. Famille.

The day after the evacuation of the refugees at St. Paul’s, the interahamwe came to take vengeance. Many Tutsi men were killed after a meeting took place between Munyeshyaka, Col. Munyakazi²⁸, préfet Renzaho, Angéline and the councillor of Rugenge, Odette. Renzaho looked at all the bodies of the victims and said that this was not enough. And indeed, there were other abductions.

The bodies of the men lay in the courtyard for two days. Then, in exchange for including their names on the list of refugees to be evacuated by UNAMIR, Fr. Munyeshyaka asked the surviving men to put their bodies in the garage, away from the prying eyes of UNAMIR and visiting journalists.

Col. Laurent Munyakazi returned to Ste. Famille on 19 June, this time to take away 17 young men who he said were “wanted for interrogation.” The men never returned.

²⁷ UNAMIR had made arrangements with the government and the RPF to allow refugees to choose whether they wished to be escorted to the areas under the control of the RPF or the government.

²⁸ Col. Laurent Munyakazi, then in charge of Muhima police station, is now an officer in the RPA.

Withholding Protection

Despite the rapid progress of the genocide in the city, and the evidence that Renzaho was the man at the helm, communities and individuals made frantic appeals to him for help. Tutsis who had known him were aware that he had the authority and the means to help them. Hutus who were anxious to help the people who had turned to them for succour in turn looked to Renzaho for assistance.

Gisimba Orphanage

One of the men who looked to Col. Renzaho for protection is Damas Mutezintare Gisimba, who was in charge of the Gisimba orphanage in sector Nyakabanda, founded in 1980 by his father. The orphanage looked after 60 orphans. In April 1994, it became home to several hundred refugees.

We used to invite Renzaho to various celebrations, and I had been to meetings with him several times.

The first refugees—mainly women and children—arrived at the orphanage at 3:00 a.m. on 7 April. The threats to the orphanage began on 13 April when militiamen entered the premises with the intention of kidnapping the young girls among the orphans. Damas paid them off and they left, without discovering the presence of the refugees. In May, a meeting was held at the Nyakabanda sector office chaired by the councillor, Grégoire Nyirimanzi, and the national head of the interahamwe, Robert Kajuga. As Nyirimanzi had informed the meeting that the orphanage was sheltering refugees, all the participants decided to visit the orphanage to see for themselves. By then, there were more than 300 people at the orphanage. About 50 militiamen arrived, on foot and in vehicles, saying that boys aged between 15-18 were *Inyenzi* and “they had to take them away.” Fortunately, Damas had been forewarned by a child and had a chance to hide all the adults in the ceiling. After a long discussion, they agreed to leave. But the councillor returned, on the pretext that the orphanage had a container full of iron bars; when he examined it, he saw only beans and other food supplies. On 12 June, a social worker at the orphanage was killed by the notorious militiaman, Kigingi, mentioned above. Damas decided to appeal to the préfet, saying that Renzaho “knows me very well.”

The orphanage was increasingly under threat. People were saying everywhere that there were *Inyenzi* at the orphanage. I decided to phone Renzaho, thinking that he'd save us. The communal policeman at the sector office let me use the phone.

I phoned Renzaho and begged him to save the orphanage. Renzaho was very angry and said rudely: “I know all about you. You've even gone as far as sheltering adults, who are not orphans, in your orphanage. You'll pay dearly for this.” Then he hung up.

Determined to secure protection, Damas decided to visit Renzaho on 14 June, accompanied by Carl Wilkens, an employee of the Adventist relief agency, ADRA.

My aim was to beg Renzaho to spare the orphanage. Carl Wilkens went in and explained the reason for our visit and said we had come together. The préfet told him that he would not see me. Carl insisted, but the préfet categorically refused. Carl and I went back to the orphanage. I was really very dependant; I could see that it was all over.

His fears were realized a few days later.

On the night of 19 June, we were attacked by about 10 militiamen, including Kigingi and Shumbusho [another prominent militiaman]. They found an adolescent boy outside, captured and tortured him. The boy told them there were others in the ceiling. They made them come down. Three managed to escape, and five were tortured all night, near the marketplace. But they were brave and refused to admit there were any other refugees in the orphanage. They said they had got in without my knowledge. They were killed the next morning.

Damas left the orphanage the same day, on the 20th. “I was almost crazy and didn’t have any idea where I was going.” In addition to fear of the interahamwe, he had no food for the children or the refugees. He reached the office of the Red Cross, and through radio contact with Carl Wilkens, learned that the orphanage was surrounded by militiamen who had come from the sector office and who had made it clear that they intended to kill Damas. He got a lift to the Parish of St. Michel. Shortly afterwards, Wilkens made arrangements for the UN to evacuate the orphans and refugees to St. Michel. They hid in the cellar. But their ordeal was not over.

Soldiers kept asking me to draw up separate lists of adults and children. I kept lying to them, taking a few years off the adults’ ages and changing their names, until the RPF arrived on 3 July.

Damas has no doubt that Renzaho had the authority and the means to defend the refugees.

Col. Renzaho could have protected the victims of the genocide. But he did nothing at all, not even for those right near him at Ste. Famille and St. Michel, although he often went there. He refused to see me because he didn’t want a single Tutsi to survive. The government left the city, but he stayed on here. He co-ordinated all the operations in Kigali until 3 July when he fled. He had the power to do anything he wanted, but he didn’t want to do anything positive. Instead, he chose to exterminate the Tutsis.²⁹

Killing With Discretion: Keeping the Evidence Out of Sight

From the outset, Col. Renzaho was conscious of the importance of hiding the evidence of the genocide. This was particularly crucial in the capital city, the headquarters of UNAMIR, the base for many diplomats, aid workers and other foreigners—and a magnet for journalists. Renzaho conveyed his instructions to local officials as early as 7 April. Amri Karekezi said he toured his neighbourhood at 7:30 a.m. on the 7th and found the bodies of numerous Tutsis littering the street.

I went back home and phoned the préfet in his office. I told him what I had just seen in Rugunga. Renzaho told me to “get all those bodies buried.” The people in that area wanted to bury the bodies nearby, within Rugunga cellule itself, but Renzaho refused. He ordered that they should be buried in Nyamirambo cemetery. Still on the phone, the préfet told me to take all the vehicles I could find in my sector, especially vans, and load them with bodies wherever we found them, and take them to Nyamirambo cemetery. He also told me he had sent the bourgmestre to the Ministry of Public Works to ask for vehicles to help in this work, and he had asked the Kigali prison authorities to make prisoners available to bury the dead.

From that moment on, I gave up driving around the neighbourhood. I realized that the préfet was well aware of everything that was going on.

Kamatamu was one of the councillors who received vehicles from the préfet.

The corpses were evacuated by vehicles which Renzaho sent us—a blue Daihatsu and yellow Nissan trucks. These corpses were thrown into mass graves which had been dug in Nyamirambo. One day, towards the end of April, I went along when they took the bodies to Nyamirambo.

In the words of Gervais Dusabemungo, a deputy préfet in Kigali at the time of the interview, “for Renzaho, the human remains of Tutsis were not dead bodies but “filth.”

He said on Radio Rwanda that state employees should come and help the workers in the hygiene section to clean up the filth from the town. He was speaking of the numerous dead bodies which were lying here and there around the city. On this question of the “filth”, he opened up a mass grave near the Central Hospital of Kigali (CHK) where trucks, crammed full of dead bodies, used to throw out these bodies. As far as he was concerned, the bodies of dead Tutsi did not need to be properly buried.

²⁹ Interviewed 28 January 1999.

The mass graves near CHK were discovered in early 1995 and the bodies given a decent burial.

Notwithstanding his guidelines, bodies continued to litter the streets of Kigali. This represented a public relations disaster for the interim government. From mid-April, a huge number of foreign journalists had descended on Kigali and newspapers, radios and television stations the world over had devoted considerable coverage to the state-directed killings in Rwanda. As Western television stations and newspapers also covered the evacuation of expatriates in detail, the bodies that lay by the wayside along the route to the airport were all too evident from the footage and the photographs. It became important to dump the bodies where foreigners could not access.

Renzaho spoke about the issue at the security meeting of 18 April. He did not mince his words, according to Karekezi.

The préfet told us: “ I don’t want to see any more bodies lying near the roadsides.”

The militia, he said, “changed their killing strategy” after the meeting of 18 April.

Before, they used to kill and leave the bodies wherever they fell. But after that meeting, the interahamwe would bury their victims a few minutes after killing them. Some victims were forced to dig their own graves, before they were killed.

Vianney Munyangondo also noticed the change in the tactics of the interahamwe.

Renzaho called a meeting of Kigali lorry drivers and told them that the bodies lying all over the roads in town allowed the international media to publicize what was going on in Rwanda. He asked them to be responsible for burying them.

Munyangondo saw victims digging their own graves.

Renzaho must have warned the killers, because we noticed some changes from that time on. Victims at roadblocks were asked to dig their own graves before being killed. I saw that along the main road through Gitega; the victims were sitting in graves they had dug, and then they were shot. Before that, there were heaps of bodies along the road. Convicts from Kigali central prison collected the bodies.

The sight of people being killed at roadblocks was an image that concerned Renzaho even more than the corpses on the road. Célestin Sezibera attended a security council meeting on 25 April where, he said, Renzaho explained his worry that foreign journalists could see people being killed at the roadblocks. He said that Renzaho asked them to create committees to “defuse the situation.”

But the militiamen were more interested in wiping out Tutsis than in diplomatic niceties. And there were so many people to kill that it was not easy to make the evidence disappear. Nevertheless, Renzaho was determined to achieve both goals simultaneously. He addressed the councillors after their meeting of 30 April.

Renzaho told us councillors to go and see our respective bourgmestres to receive additional instructions. I went to the commune office and our bourgmestre, Bizimana, told me: “We’ve been told that the international community has condemned the massacres of innocent people in Rwanda and, because of that, they’ll soon be touring all the sectors of Kigali to see the situation. You must therefore get rid of any traces that might compromise us. You must farm the land and sow beans wherever houses have been wrecked or demolished.”

The communal policeman, Claver Karegeya, said the pace of the clean-up operation intensified at the end of April.

Towards the end of April, machines came from the Ministry of public works to dig mass graves and trucks to dump the bodies in these mass graves. This was to carry out what the préfet called “cleansing.”

