



Slaughter in Central Africa

Adventists are the largest Protestant church in Rwanda, 10 percent of the Protestants in Burundi.

On April 6, the presidents of Burundi and Rwanda were killed in Kigali, the Rwandan capital. An airplane in which they were traveling was shot down by a rocket fired from the ground. According to United Nations officials, Presidents Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi, 39, and Juvenal Habyarimana of Rwanda, 57, were victims of "an assassination." They were returning together from Tanzania, where they had been attending a conference attempting to end the ethnic killing in their countries. Both men were Hutus in countries composed of Hutu tribal majorities and Tutsi minorities. Rwanda immediately erupted in violence.

Adventists constitute a higher percentage of the population of both central African countries than exists in most other parts of the globe. According to 1992 figures, one in every 33 Rwandans and one in every 166 Burundese is an Adventist. (By comparison, one in every 500 U.S. citizens is an Adventist. The highest concentration of Adventists is one in every 14 Jamaicans.)

Over the past 25 years ethnic con-

flicts have killed hundreds of thousands of people in each country. Following the assassination in October of President Ndadaye, the first Hutu to head the Burundi government, 30,000 to 50,000 people were killed. Finally, a successor was chosen, Ntaryamira, who died in the plane crash. In Rwanda, at press time, the Red Cross estimates there have been 200,000 killings since the April assassination of the president. A comparable ratio of deaths among the 300,000 Seventh-day Adventist Rwandese (1994 figures) would mean 8,000

Adventists have been killed.

We here reprint two reports, one on Rwanda, the other on Burundi. Both discuss Adventists. The first appeared April 12, 1994, in The New York Times. (Copyright © 1994 by the New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.) The second is an analysis of the causes of recent ethnic struggles in Burundi by Willy Fautre, a staff correspondent for News Network International, dated January 21, 1994. It appeared in *Bibliscope*, a publication of Christians in Crisis.

—The Editors

"A Scar on Our Soul"

by William E. Schmidt
Special to The New York Times

Bujumbura, Burundi, April 11—The worst part, says Phil Van Lanen, was not the constant crackle of gunfire around the house, or the trucks piled with corpses, or even the gangs of wild-eyed young men who were always outside, somewhere, waving clubs and machetes

and looking for someone to kill.

The worst part, said Mr. Van Lanen, a relief worker with the Seventh-day Adventist Church mission in Rwanda, was fleeing Kigali, and leaving behind African friends and co-workers.

"Now that we are out," Mr. Van

Lanen said today, "I fear, in a way, that we have betrayed the people we came to help." Fighting both guilt and tears as he spoke, the 37-year-old dental technician at the church's clinic in Kigali added, "I think we have left a scar on our soul that will take a long time to heal."

Church missions account for most of the 250 or so Americans who were residents of Rwanda, and they were among the last Americans to leave Rwanda by overland convoy Sunday, after the United States Ambassador, David Rawson, the son of missionaries himself, persuaded them to go.

Anguish Over What to Do

"**H**as my faith been tested by what happened in Kigali?" said Ron Clark, another church worker. He paused. "Yes. Yes. I suppose it has. I keep asking myself, how could I have left?"

For four days, the Van Lanens and the Clarks and other church workers prayed and anguished over what to do. At the same time, and at considerable risk, they provided refuge and comfort to frightened Rwandan friends desperate to escape the blood lust and ancient ethnic hatreds that have once more inflamed Rwanda.

Now, they fear that most of those people—deprived of their protection—will become victims of the bloodletting that has set the majority Hutu tribe of Rwanda against the minority Tutsis. Red Cross officials estimate that the violence has taken more than 10,000 lives in Kigali alone, and as many or more in the countryside.

"To be in the middle of all this, to watch them turn from the most wonderful, the most smiling, the most gentle of people, to such treacherous murderers is beyond

comprehension," said Dr. Per Houmann, a dentist who runs the Adventists' clinic. "It is almost as if someone flips a switch."

Thoughts of Returning

This morning, nearly a dozen weary missionary families stood on the steamy tarmac of the airport here, among some 65 people waiting to board a C-141 cargo plane bound for the sanctuary of Nairobi. A contingent of United States Marines had secured the airport, where another group of about 150 Americans had left Sunday.

Like most of the foreigners who were evacuated from Rwanda over the weekend, the Americans spoke today of their relief and their thanks that they too had escaped the chaos of Kigali. But they also spent much of their time talking of the day they would go back, and contemplating who and what they would find when they got there.

Mr. Van Lanen begins to weep when he talks of the eight Tutsi girls who used to work in his dental clinic; they lived in a shantytown suburb of Kigali called Nyar-

mirambo, or the place of skulls, where Hutu mobs last week left bodies of Tutsi victims stacked against walls.

Mr. Clark's voice catches, and he gulps for air, when he recalls the telephone calls from a Tutsi worker, her voice quivering with fear as she said that Hutu gunmen were going from house to house on her street, breaking down doors and shooting.

"She said she was hiding in the kitchen, that they were just next door, that they were coming to get her," Mr. Clark said. "And then the line went dead."

One Chose to Remain

The Adventists have the second-largest church mission in Rwanda, after the Catholics, with a staff of about 100, including some 40 Americans. They operate a university, an orphanage, a school and a hospital, as well as the dental clinic in Kigali.

At least one of their number has chosen to stay behind, an American relief worker who remains in Kigali, even though the American Embassy has evacuated all of its staff and relief agencies have shut down operations.

Kigali erupted in violence early Thursday morning, after a suspicious plane crash killed the Presidents of both Rwanda and Burundi, both of whom were Hutus. Soldiers and roving Hutu gangs immediately set out to exact retribution against Tutsis, who make up the bulk of a guerrilla movement that opposes the Government.

"The horror," said Mr. Clark, who speaks Kinyarwanda, the language of Rwanda, "is that many of the people who are killed are killed because of the shape of their nose," a reference, he explained, to the



sharply different physical characteristics of Tutsis and Hutus.

Tutsis tend to be taller, with narrow features and high cheekbones; the Hutus are shorter, with flatter, broader noses.

For the most part, the mission workers said they never felt they or other foreigners were the specific targets of the violence. The threat lay in the wholly unpredictable behavior of the mobs, which included many drunken young men. The shelling was also random; on Friday morning, a mortar crashed into the patio of the home of Scott Mueller, a Baptist missionary, blowing out all the windows in the house.

Moments of Bravery

It killed our dog, but none of us were hurt," said Cindy Mueller, who had been hiding in the hallway with her husband and their two young children. Later, when the Muellers made their own way to the airport during a lull in the fighting, they were stopped at a roadblock by Rwandan soldiers

who threatened them. When Mrs. Mueller began to cry, she said the soldiers offered to give back the blankets and soccer balls the Muellers had given them to allow the family to pass.

In the horror and bloodshed of the next four days, there were also moments, they said, of bravery and sacrifice. One of the gardeners at the Adventist compound, a Hutu, risked his life to wander into the chaos of the streets to retrieve Tutsi families who feared they were in danger. By Saturday, there were 23 people inside the Houmanns' tiny house.

For his part, Mr. Clark sat at the airport today, his eyes red, while he wrestled with the terrible events of the last few days. "I had always believed that somehow, somewhere along the line, there is going to be a person God can use to take care of others," said Mr. Clark, as he sat alongside his wife and two children, thinking about the people he knew in Kigali.

But in Rwanda, perhaps, people learned long ago not to count too much on others. "They have a proverb," he said. "It goes: 'When life is thrown up, everyman will catch his own.'"

Catholic, 10 percent is Protestant, one percent is Muslim, and the remainder is animist.

In 1993, historian and former seminarian Raphael Ntibazonkiza, 48, published "Au Pays des Seignerus de la Lance" (*In the Country of the Lords of the Spear*), a two-volume set on the history of Burundi. He is currently based in Brussels, where he represents the interests of the late Ndadaye's Frodebu political party.

News Network International: What role did the Roman Catholic Church play during the six years that Major Pierre Buyoya's regime was in power?

Raphael Ntibazonkiza: The role of the Catholic church in Burundi has always been very complex and double-sided. On the one hand, the hierarchy has always supported the power—either the monarchy or the military republics of General Michel Micombero, Colonel Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, and Major Pierre Buyoya. On the other hand, the clerics who were sharing the daily life of their parishioners have defended the rights of the Burundese people throughout the whole history of the country.

Under Bagaza's government, from 1976 to 1987, all the churches were heavily persecuted. When he was overthrown by a military coup on September 3, 1987, his successor, Buyoya, was viewed as the savior, not only of the country, but also of the Catholic church, which could recover its rights, its privileges, and its properties confiscated under the former regime.

The accession to power of Buyoya, a Catholic, and his Uprona Party was heartily welcomed by the Burundese hierarchy and the Vatican. The new president of Burundi managed to restore the confidence between church and state.

Adventists Unbanned in Burundi

by Willy Fautre

Independence and democracy have not come easily to Burundi, the former Belgian colony in Central Africa. Since gaining independence in 1962, the country has endured a variety of dictatorships, all dominated by the minority Tutsis and their monoethnic army.

In June 1993, Burundi freed itself from the six-year-old military regime of Major Pierre Buyoya through democratic elections which

brought Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu tribesman, to the presidency. On October 21, however, Ndadaye was assassinated. In the ensuing weeks, interethnic tensions between Burundi's Tutsi minority and Hutu majority have escalated to violent proportions—more than 100,000 people are believed to have died in mass killings.

About 65 percent of Burundi's 6.5 million population is Roman

NNI: Does the ethnic composition of the Bishops' Conference explain the church's continued support of the regime despite its lack of democracy?

RN: Indeed. The Catholic hierarchy has always been dominated by the Tutsis. In 1990, there were seven bishops in Burundi: five Tutsis and two Hutus. Gradually, under the influence of the Pope, an ethnic balance has been established, but it does not correspond to the demographic realities. Now there are eight bishops: four Tutsis and four Hutus, whereas the population is 85 percent Hutu.

Moreover, the archbishop, Joachim Ruhuna from Gitega, and the president of the Bishops' Conference, Bernard Bududira, are still hardline Tutsis. These two big tenors still hold the whole church in their hands on the national level and represent it, in their way, in international forums and at the Vatican.

The low clergy, in majority Hutu, has been staying at the side of the people, [sharing] their political choices and [supporting] the emerging political opposition, represented by the Frodebu Party. So, while the hierarchy's position has been motivated by corporatist interests, the low clergy, [which] has also benefited from the religious liberalization policy, has taken sides with the Christian people in their struggle for democracy.

NNI: What about the role played by the various Protestant churches?

RN: In Burundi, the Protestant community is divided up as follows: 45 percent Anglicans, 25 percent Pentecostals, 20 percent Meth-

odist, and about 10 percent Seventh-day Adventists. The big majority of the Protestant churches have more Hutu than Tutsi members.

On the pastoral level, the situation is more complex. The Anglican and Pentecostal churches are led by Tutsi hierarchies, whereas the United Methodist Church of Burundi and the Seventh-day Adventist Church have a Hutu-dominated leadership.

NNI: Did any changes occur in the policy of the different churches after the electoral victories of the Frodebu Party and Melchior Ndadaye?

RN: Nothing changed among the churches which have supported the former regime. However, the victory of the Frodebu and Ndadaye meant the promotion of the political, ethnic, social, and religious opposition: the low clergy of the Catholic, Anglican, and Pentecostal churches, and, of course, the clergy and the hierarchy of the Methodist and Seventh-day Adventist churches. The former religious supporters of Buyoya did not change their position, but remained quite cool toward the new government.

Ndadaye, who was a Catholic and a true democrat, widened the space of religious freedom by recognizing the Seventh-day Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses, who were still banned under Buyoya's government. He also took a spectacular initiative when he chose as spiritual adviser Alfred Ndoricimba, the archbishop of the United Methodist Church of Burundi. For the Catholic hierarchy, this meant a moral disavowal and a political setback they could not accept.

NNI: How did the Ecumenical Council of Churches (ECC) react when the power changed hands?

RN: The representatives of the Burundese Protestant churches at the ECC come from the hierarchies of the Tutsi-dominated Anglican and Pentecostal churches. This is probably why the ECC kept an embarrassed silence about the political changes and later on about the coup in Burundi.

NNI: Did the churches condemn the assassination of President Ndadaye and six of his ministers? Did they disavow the putsch against the democratically-elected government?

RN: The Anglican, Pentecostal, and Catholic supporters of the former regime showed some evident reluctance to fly to the aid of the threatened government. Fortunately, the Council of African Churches, the president and the vice president of which are South African Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu and Alfred Ndoricimba, adopted a clear and tough stand: the unambiguous condemnation of the military putsch and the full support to the legal government.

The American Methodist churches also condemned the putsch. In the meantime, Ndoricimba has paid a heavy price for his stances. All his pastoral team in his diocese (Gitega) was massacred in the first week after the putsch. And December 6, 1993, the date of the national funeral held in memory of President Ndadaye, his house was looted by military [personnel] and civilians. At the time he was on an information tour in the United States. His wife had to flee to Kenya to save her life.