

SAS/SG/OAU : DIARY/NOTES
SUNDAY, APRIL 2, 1995

On this my second day of my current visit to a post-genocide Rwanda, I had quite an experience - I would say of my life time. Though I had seen TV pictures on the horrors that happened in the country between April and July 1994 and despite the repeated graphic descriptions on radio on what had been happening, my actual confrontation with the killing fields is an experience that was agonising and certainly it is something I will never forget for the rest of my life. It is difficult, indeed it is impossible to comprehend such bestiality as I came across in the killing fields of the Nyarubuye Catholic Mission at Kibungu Prefecture.

We went to Nyarubuye by UNAMIR helicopters, Two of them were placed at our disposal. We covered the distance from Kigali to Nyarubuye in some 20 minutes. I was accompanied by the Minister for Social Development; the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Anastase Gasana and the Director of Cabinet of the President, Emmanuel Gasana. The visit to Nyarubuye was our first engagement of the day. We left Kigali at about 0940 hours and were in Nyarubuye at 1000 hours where we were met by the Prefect of Kibungu (the District Commissioner) and other local officials. Immediately we were taken around the area and more specifically within the compounds of the Nyarubuye Catholic Mission. It was an awesome and gruesome sight. there were the remains of the dead bodies every where, in the different rooms of the Mission, in the compound as well as outside the compound - skeletons of women, men, children, the young and the old. Most of these people had been brutally struck by machetes. Others were victims of hand grenades deliberately thrown at them. At least 7,000 people were butchered here in a cold-blooded and fiendish manner. Most, if not all the victims were Tutsis. They came to the church in the belief that the sanctuary of the church was sacrosanct, and therefore would not be harmed. Alas ! this was not to be. I saw many touching situations there. These included entire families wiped out; little children decimated and in some rare occasions, I met with one or so survivor of families which had been exterminated. One such case was a little boy aged 8 years old. The boy who was about seven years old when the genocide took place survived by a miracle. Young Havugimana,

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for that is his name survived by simply being taken as dead when he hid among the corpses. His parents were killed and so were his six brothers and sisters. After lying among the corpses for some time until the hackers of his parents and others had left the Mission, Havugimana hid himself in one of the little rooms used by servants where he survived for days drinking water. The young boy was clearly traumatised. I decided to adopt him not so much in the sense of taking him away from Rwanda but in terms of looking after him until he grows up and in many ways making myself as his adopted father. The Minister of Social Affairs and the Minister of Foreign Affairs agreed to subsequently give me all the particulars and make the necessary arrangements for me to take care of the boy, whose name Havugimana in Kirundi means "God who commands".

While at Nyarubuye, I addressed a gathering of about 200 to 300 people who had gathered near the Nyarubuye Catholic Mission and promised that the OAU will work in concert with the United Nations to ensure that those who committed such monstrous atrocities will face the full weight of the law.

At about 1130 hours we were back at Kigali International Airport. At 1230 hours we again left by helicopters for an orphanage at Nyamata which is in the Prefecture of Kigali. The trip took 10 minutes of flying time. And again, I was accompanied by the Minister for Social Affairs, Mr. P. Mugabo, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Anastase Gasana and the Director of Cabinet of the President, Mr. Emmanuel Gasana. On arrival we were met by the Prefect of Kigali, the Coordinator of the Nyamata Orphanages - Mrs. Rudasingwa as well as the Director of Social Affairs in the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ms. Rose-Marie Mseminari. The last-mentioned who speaks very fluent English served as my interpreter during the visit.

Nyamata Orphanages are two - Nyamata I and Nyamata II. They are being run by the Government with the support of an Italian NGO called OMAM. The orphanage was first established in 1991 following the first massacre. The number grew subsequent to the genocide. There are here about 461 children - all orphans ranging in age from 1 to 16 years old. There

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are children who have now gone to school; some are in primary school and some in secondary school. Here the orphans are given a new hope and, in a sense, a new lease of life. After the depressing and indeed indescribably painful experience that I have had at Nyarubuye Catholic Mission in the midst of thousands of corpses, I found myself re-charged with hope.

Here among other things, a new Rwanda was being constructed. And I believe we all have a duty and responsibility to be helpful as possible in improving the lot of these orphans and helping them not only to recover from this traumatic experiences but above all, to begin a new life. Although there are at least 80 other orphanages of this type and mostly of conditions which are less favourable, I decided that the OAU should make at least a symbolic gesture of support and solidarity. Thus, after we had toured the premises, including the bedrooms (where children are accommodated at least 20 in one hall, the dinning rooms and the clinic and after the children had given us a beautiful cultural performance depicting the rich cultural heritage of the Banyarwanda and after the Prefect had made a statement and the spokesperson of the Orphanage had delivered their message of welcome, I rose to speak. I commended the efforts being made by the Government and the NGO. On what was being done here in the context of opening up a new chapter for Rwanda, I pledged on behalf of the OAU, to make the following contribution :-

- i) 200 Beds;
- ii) 200 Mattresses;
- iii) One Vehicle (a Mini Bus of 16 Persons).

This announcement was received with great jubilation. Mention should be made of the fact that in addition to the orphans and the school staff, and Government and NGO officials, there were altogether about 1000 people who had come to witness my visit.

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It was now getting late for it was already nearing 1445 hours and we had yet another visit to undertake. Thus, we left again by helicopter for Nyagatera (Mutara) where we went to see efforts being made to receive the old refugees. The flight took 30 minutes. On arrival we were met by the Minister for Rehabilitation, Dr. Jacques Bihozogava. There in Mutara we spent about one hour during which we visited an area where hundreds of thousands of refugees were awaiting settlement. They read out a memorandum to me among other things calling for the punishment of those who committed atrocities and genocide as well as urging me to be the goodwill Ambassador for Mutara in mobilising international understanding and support for their plight. In my remarks, I encouraged their efforts and observed that it will not be easy for the government to do what they would want to do, considering the many restrictions and challenges. But what was encouraging was that the refugees themselves understood fully well the limitations of the government which in their memorandum they had described as "an impoverished government". I agreed to be a goodwill Ambassador not only of Mutara but for the new Rwanda in general.

At about 1700 hours we took off from Mutara on our way back to Kigali where we landed at Kanombe Airport at about 1530 hours.

By 1800 hours we were back at Hotel Mille Collines.

The last engagement for the day/evening was a dinner/reception organised by the OAU Representative in Rwanda, Joe Felli. This was held in one of the Restaurants with the Ghana Military Band, part of the Ghana Battalion, treating us to a variety of music, including, of course Ghanaian Highlife. It was a pleasant evening with a cross-section of participants. Those who attended the function included several high officials of the Government, including the Minister of the Interior, Seth Sendashonga, the Minister of Youth and Sports, Patrick Mazimhake, the Director of Cabinet, Emmanuel Gasana, as well as UNAMIR officials and some members of the Diplomatic Corps, including the Ambassador of the United States and Mrs. Rawson.