

# More Journeys: Rwanda 1994

8-12 June 1994

## My Diary.



### Wednesday 8 June 1994

I felt particularly tired and anxious about the upcoming visit to Rwanda. The vagueness of the Rwanda arrangements doubtless contributed to my unease, and the heaviness of the previous week in Kenya added to my sense of burden. With a heavy heart, I left Ian and walked heavily to Heathrow Terminal 4.

I waited in the lounge, reading the British papers. One report from Rwanda stuck in my mind and my stomach. An eyewitness described seeing the severed bodies of small children. "The body on one side of the road. The severed head on the other side of the road. Ribbons still in her hair." There was such awful poignancy about this.

Amazingly, the flight on British Airways improved my demeanour. That was a surprise, but the service was so nice, and the flight lightly loaded, so I stuck my legs up on the seat in front of me and managed a bit of sleep before the 4 am arrival! Before that, I enjoyed the Coen brothers' movie *The Hudsucker Proxy*, which stars Paul Newman and Tim Robbins. The woman lead, whose name I could not find in the airline information, but I think it was Jennifer Jason Leigh was outstanding. It was a marvellous part that had been written for her. Most of the acting was hammy and melodramatic, but this was obviously what the Coens wanted. Such quirky filmmakers. And so enjoyable. Also, BA had some nice touches with peanuts specially

packaged in interesting containers. Amazing what a bit of thoughtful design can do. And it doesn't cost any more to do things with flair. A small thing to amuse my small mind.

#### **Thursday 9 June 1994**

A man with a van was waiting to pick me up at 4 a.m. in Nairobi, so that went OK, and I checked in at the hotel without trouble. Karen Homer, who was organising my visit, was waiting with a package of information. I read it over and went back to bed until 7:30 a.m.

Around 9, I called Karen and discussed the plan. The deal was to fly into Kampala, Uganda, that afternoon and stay overnight at a hotel. I'd have dinner with Kofi Hagan, the Uganda director.

Friday, we would drive down to the border of Rwanda. Karen said it took about 6 hours.

On Saturday, we would do some real work, visiting a centre for displaced people, including an orphanage we supported. We should get material for the Rwandan Orphans program we would launch on my return. She said about 17,000 people were camped at a Catholic school there.

Sunday was to be a wasted day as the border was closed. On Monday, we were planning to visit Rutare, a second place where about 70,000 people were living under plastic sheets. Then, on Monday, we would drive back. On Tuesday, we would fly back to Nairobi, and so on.

I suggested to Karen that the value added by the Monday visit was not great. After discussing it, we decided to try to visit both Byumba and Rutare on Saturday (Jacob had said they had done this before), drive back to Kampala on Sunday, fly out on Monday and then I could come back through London, arrive home a little earlier than originally planned. Also, it would mean avoiding the long delays at Harare and Perth that were in the original itinerary.

She went to work on this, and I went down to have morning tea with Jacob Akol. He seemed in good spirits but was, as always, concerned about strategic support for communications, advocacy and marketing. I tried to encourage him with our discussion in Manila about relief, but I share his gloom about how much momentum we have lost since the death of NewsVision and Warwick's conclusion in Monrovia.

Jacob gave me a potted history of Rwanda. What were the reasons for the Rwanda killings?

- a. **A tribal/ethnic divide.** This is the common excuse, but it is wildly simplistic. Many Rwandans reject it. The Rwandan Patriotic Front (the rebels) rejected it, claiming to represent all Rwandans. It is nevertheless true that Hutus and Tutsis have been killing one another and that the Government side especially has exploited and abused this ethnic difference. It is not, however, the reason for the fighting. Ethnic differences do not automatically create hatred and killings any more than ethnic similarities guarantee peace. The Somalis are a single tribe. Brothers often kill brothers.
- b. **A class struggle.** This would also be a simplification, but there is an element of class struggle behind what is happening. Over centuries, the Tutsi people have tended to be the Lords of the Manor and the Hutus, the serfs.
- c. **The Colonists.** Again, this is not the reason but another factor. The Belgians exacerbated the differences between Tutsi and Hutu by allowing benefits, such as education, to flow to Tutsis. Doubtless, they were the most responsive, and perhaps the Belgians favoured the Tutsis unintentionally.
- d. **Mismanaged politics.** The Belgians backed a 1959 coup before independence in which the majority of Hutus threw out the traditional rulers, the Tutsis. This also resulted in the Belgians being thrown out. Many Belgians and Tutsis fled that country at that time.

- e. **International politics.** Neighbouring Uganda was engaged in civil war against Obote during the 1980s. Museveni, now the President of Uganda, recruited disenfranchised Tutsis into his rebel army and subsequently gave them posts in his victorious forces. Thus, he trained a Rwandan army in exile.
- f. **Propaganda.** Habyarimana, the Rwandan President, encouraged the creation of Hutu militias and fed them a diet of hateful stereotypes feeding ethnic differences.
- g. **Neighbouring Jingoism.** Museveni tried to respond to concerns in his own country about the number of Rwandans living in Uganda by telling Rwandans to go home and urging Rwanda to take them back.
- h. **Death of the Presidents.** When Habyarimana was killed, the country was left without the pressure cooker lid of leadership. The militias, fed with evil propaganda by the government radio station, went mad.
- i. **Opportunism.** Into the gap strode Rwandans from everywhere. Many in the Ugandan army, including a deputy general, left their posts and joined the RPF.

At least nine factors coalesced into this explosion of resentment, bitterness and fearful murder.

I left Jacob after an hour, and Karen soon returned to say that the arrangements were fine. I made changes to my flight bookings, and it was soon midday. Nicola and Peter Wilkinson from the UK were waiting for lunch with me. Nicola was the program officer running the Rwanda Relief program from Nairobi, controlled remotely by Rich Moseanka in the international office in Los Angeles. Peter, her husband, was the logistics officer. We had a pleasant lunch, although I felt a little light-headed from broken sleep, and we did not discuss the program in too much depth.

Our flight to Entebbe Airport in Uganda was due at 4 pm. Karen wanted us to get to the airport before 2, so we left at 1. I am constantly amazed how early people arrive for flights when they don't need to. Sure, the airlines ask you to be there 2 hours before the flight, but it is clear to any experienced traveller that this is unnecessary except in a few places. Two hours before the flight, no one from Uganda Airlines even checked us in. In any case, I was reading the Ken Follett novel, "A Dangerous Fortune", and enjoying it, so this passed the time for a while.

Linda Carpenter, one of the regional finance staff, an American, also travelled with us (neither of us knew at this time that she was later to serve on my staff in Vienna as Regional Finance Director).

We were told that the flight would be one hour late at check-in. At 5 pm. Fine. We went through and waited. I got brain-weary with my novel and went for a stroll. I needed a long lie down. Around 4.50, Karen decided to see what was happening and found that people were going through, although I could not see an aircraft on the tarmac. We followed like sheep and were held in the gate lounge for half an hour. Finally, after 5.30, we were told to board. But what? There was no 737 on the tarmac. But there was a small 17-seat twin prop plane with the markings of Tropic Air on its side and tail. It was an LET410UVP-E. (Oh yeah?) We identified our bags and climbed on board without an explanation for this odd aircraft on a sector normally serviced by a Boeing 737 as Ansett and Qantas fly between Sydney and Melbourne. Our guess was that the original equipment was unavailable (obviously!), but no one said anything.

At 6, we took off for a two-hour flight (usually under one hour in the 737). My brain shut down somewhere at this point, and I dozed restlessly for half an hour or so. Across the aisle from me was a French-Canadian man to whom I said "Bonjour" with great fluency, and he replied with a 35-word sentence to which I said "Oui" knowingly. This was not the right response, so he mercifully lapsed into English. He was with four others from Oxfam Canada, going, like us, for a brief visit to Rwanda.

The pilot had put some soft drinks in a crate near the back of the aircraft, so we broke these out. I walked down the short aisle, asking people if they wanted “Pernod, Champagne or soft drinks.” Most people laughed.

Kofi and the manager of the Rakai AIDS project were waiting at the airport, and we were ushered into the VIP lounge while a woman took our passports and baggage vouchers and dealt with the formalities. We talked about the AIDS project. One-quarter of all the children in Rakai province had lost one or both parents to AIDS. There were 70,000 orphans in this province alone. Out of a total population of 380,000 people. Perhaps AIDS was doing as much damage in Uganda as war is doing in Rwanda.

Karen commended Kofi and his team for their “cholera prevention program” in the Rakai province. This was the body-snatching project. They were pulling Rwandan corpses out of the river before they got into Lake Victoria. Thus preventing cholera.

We drove into town. Kofi begged off dinner owing to the late hour, which I thought was right for him to do so he could be home with his family. We checked into the Hotel Equatoriana. The rooms were roomy, and the traffic noise was a little intrusive, but the hotel was very nice otherwise. There was CNN on the tele, but I turned it off immediately and tuned in to the BBC World Service on my radio. I can watch an hour of CNN and still feel like I have not discovered anything useful. Also, the first phrase of most “international” stories is “The U.S. . . .”

#### **Friday 10 June 1994**

Sam picked us up in a 110 Land Rover, and we set off for Kabale in Uganda, near the Rwanda border. This was a drive of over 400 kilometres via Masaka and Mbarara, which I realised I had visited in 1978, the week after Idi Amin had fled the country.

“He heard I was coming,” I joked to Kofi last night.

“You should have come sooner then” he responded with a big grin.

I remembered little of the drive from 16 years ago, but one large, bombed building in Masaka, of which I had a photo, was still in its unchanged bombed form.

Sam drove fast, which increased my sense of mortality. I promised I would ride in the back seats for the rest of the trip. That did not lessen the danger, but it made me less aware of it.

The roads were crowded with people, walking or riding bikes, many burdened with huge loads of bananas, charcoal, timber and the dozen other things that needed to be transported in small quantities. Men and women, but mostly women, were walking with heavy loads on their heads. Water in plastic jerry cans was the most common.

Added to the people were crowds of animals. Dogs, goats and cattle were everywhere. Vehicles skated in and out of this mobile host at speeds up to 150 kmh. Thankfully, the Land Rover could manage little more than 120.

Along the road, the land was lush and green. Everywhere there were crops. Bananas for sale in roadside stalls. A series of drum sellers all grouped together in the best retailing strategy. At another place, a two hundred metre line of shops, all selling tomatoes in various shades of green through red, were arranged in identical small pyramids.

Later, as I described my admiration for this scene to Winnie Babihuga, our project manager in Byumba, she said, “The contrast with Rwanda is very powerful. You will discover it. It is silent. There are no people on the roads. There are no people in the fields. Everyone is hiding. Even the birds are hiding. The government chopped down whole forests to try to stop the rebels. When I first crossed from Uganda into Rwanda, I thought I was entering a dead country.” With eight million people in a tiny area, Rwanda is the most populous country in Africa (at 720 people per



square mile, it has a higher population density than the United Kingdom). Yet civil war has rendered it silent.

We stopped by the new Rwanda project office in Kabale, a house we rented. The team had moved in that day. So far, they have a phone and some chairs. Water, electricity, fax and a fridge will come later.

The White Horse Hotel in Kabale was quite a surprise. It is a very comfortable place, about three stars. There was hot water in the evening, and the beds were clean and firm. However, the pillows smelt of cigarette smoke and I found myself with hay fever, so I rolled up a towel from the bathroom and lay my head on that.

Before an afternoon nap, I found Steve Levett, our Communications colleague, and we swapped stories for an hour or so. He expressed his concern about the Mozambique-ing of Rwanda. His plausible theory was that if the RPF won, they may be unable to stop the government forces (by then, they would be rebels) from continuing a vicious Renamo-style war.

“Another seventeen years”, I moaned. Hope he is not right. But hope seems in short supply.

I woke from my afternoon nap and was ready for dinner. The team arrived, including Dr Hector Jalipa, whom I knew from Mozambique. We agreed that tomorrow, we would try to visit Byumba, where the orphanage was, and Rutare, the large camp for displaced people. Winnie said that she had set it up with the RPF and there should be no problem. Karen was pleased but dubious.

Steve introduced me to Bob, a water engineer from Victoria working with the Red Cross. He barracked for Geelong, anxious to hear how they had gone against the Bears. I spoilt his mood with the news.

Having slept in the afternoon, I was still wide awake when a large thunderstorm rolled through near midnight. Meanwhile, I finished reading my Follett novel. They all live happily ever after—except for the bad ones who die, get unmentionable diseases or grow old and bitter. But not all three.

#### **Saturday 11 June 1994**

After breakfast, we set off for the Rwanda border in a Toyota van piloted by Jimmy. Jimmy was a Ugandan who had spent his childhood in Rwanda hiding from Idi Amin and Obote. He spoke Rwandan, French and English and was, according to Karen, “very wise.” Because he was well known over the border, his presence was meant to help us get around.

On the way to the border, about 5 kilometres, Karen told us about a group of American women who had turned up in Romania to “hug babies”. In the accents of Southern belles, they announced that they were “from HUG International.” This bizarre idea tickled Steve, and he felt we should form a chapter. He envisaged these women exiting planes worldwide like automatons saying “Herg, herg” like aging Barbie dolls.

Thus encouraged, Karen told us about Madeleine Mimms, an American gold medal-winning athlete who recently came to Rwanda as the star of a TV special with some American evangelists. After showing them around the refugee camps the whole day, Karen took Mimms to have dinner with the staff working there. After dinner, Mimms announced that she would tell everyone her life story. And she did. When she was finished, she asked, “Now, do you have any personal questions you would like to ask me?” After a few polite questions, she said, “Now I would like to sing you a song”, as if she were addressing a high school assembly in Dayton, Ohio. She sang, said “Good night” and went to bed.

“She never once asked anyone else a question,” commented Karen. “She was surrounded by all these interesting people who had been dealing all day with life and death dramas in the

camp, and she never thought to ask them about their work.” Such is the personality-killing nature of fame. It kills the famous on the inside.

We filled up at an Agip petrol station. Agip's logo is a dog with a flaming tongue and six legs. I joked that Agip's head office was probably in Chernobyl.

Later, when someone mentioned “five armed guards”, Steve asked, “Like the ones at Chernobyl?”

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*“Show me someone who knows what is funny,  
and I shall show you someone who knows what's not.” (Mark Twain)*

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We checked into Uganda immigration in a one-room hut. He wrote nothing on our passports but noted our details in a book. From here, we went to the UN checkpoint for a similar routine. Then across no-man's land to the RPF checkpoint in Rwanda. Karen and Steve knew the guard in charge there, but this did not help. Karen said the RPF had difficulty identifying who were journalists and who were NGO people. You had to be one or the other. Naturally, the clearance system for NGO staff was much quicker. Thus, Karen, Steve and I told the truth that we all worked for World Vision. This was not a problem until the guard saw Steve's video camera. He was too black to blanch, but at least he went a dark grey colour.

“You're journalists!” he said as if we had an infectious disease. Karen, Steve and I all said, “No, No,” as placatingly as possible, but he thought he better check.

After 20 minutes, he advised us that we had to go to Mulindi, up the top of a nearby mountain, for journalist clearance. Sure enough, for the next three hours, we got the wait-a-while treatment. They weren't delaying us; they just seemed confused by the fact that we did not fit their neat categories. Eventually, they put us with two rather innocent American radio journos and a large and aggressive-looking minder and allowed us to go onto Byumba.

At Byumba, we needed to meet Captain Dennis and pay our respects before going to the orphanage. Of course, half of Rwanda and 20% of the rest of the world also wanted to do the same. Fortunately, Winnie turned up at the same time as the woman from USAID. Half an hour later, Captain Dennis saw us and agreed that we were not journalists, and the minder half-accused us of pretending to be journalists. I bit my tongue.

Somehow, we lost our big minder and got a little one—or a normal-sized one who was wearing a World Vision T-shirt and a Samaritan's Purse cap. He was very friendly, and the rest of the day went to plan. (Samaritan's Purse is the relief organisation set up by Dr Bob Pierce after he left World Vision.)

Captain Dennis had been complimentary about World Vision's responsiveness, so it was a surprise when we met Rose Kayitesi at the orphanage to get a long speech about how World Vision was not doing the job at the orphanage as promised to do.

A quick walk around led me to agree with her assessment. There were over 350 children here, but there were only 30 mattresses. There seemed to be little organisation, although 25 volunteers from the nearby displaced persons camp were helping. There was a clinic with reasonable stocks of medicine. But the water supply was not working, and the toilets were broken. Four pit latrines had been dug, but they were insufficient for the press of people. Food was in short supply, and a week or two before, there had been none for a week.

Yet this was a “World Vision orphanage”! I felt embarrassed and angry. Not so much at my embarrassment, I quickly dealt with that by asking questions. Given the opportunity to care for

350 kids who had already endured so much, we uncharacteristically were letting them down. I gave Rose assurances that I would investigate it. She suggested that if we could not do the job, other agencies were standing by to help. We could work in another orphanage if we wanted to when we got our act together. I felt we should get our act together right now, especially since World Vision people had located this site and set the project up originally.

It was not hard to see what the kids needed: attention to nutrition, a proper diet, mattresses and blankets for all, medical treatment for wounds (they seemed mostly to be under control), malaria, pneumonia and colds. Some children were anaemic and needed iron supplements or other multivitamins.

Outside the clinic, a teenage girl was nursing a small baby. She was Vestine Hategekimana aged 15. The baby was her niece, aged four months. Vestine told us, with her eyes looking at the ground, how she had been visiting her big sister in the capital, Kigali when they had run to the Stadium to shelter from the armed gangs. Her brother-in-law was in the army. She thought he had been killed. In the stadium, someone had thrown a bomb, and her big sister was killed. Vestine was all alone with her little niece. A few weeks later, she was trucked with others to this orphanage. She did not now know where her family was. She had no news. She was suddenly an aunty with responsibilities, and she hugged the small child tenderly and maternally as she spoke.

Speaking in French, Rose said, "Would the army look after a non-army baby?" The implication was that the RPF was caring for the children of the enemy. She meant for us to see that this was a sign of RPF tolerance and unity.

When translating, Karen used the word Hutu instead of army. Confused, I asked Rose whether the baby's father was a Hutu. She turned on me, her eyes flashing. "I did not say Hutu or Tutsi. We do not talk about Hutu and Tutsi. It is not about Hutu and Tutsi. We are all Rwandans." This is the RPF line. I agreed that removing the language of stereotypes was an important step on the long journey to peace.

"Why does everybody want to say this is a Hutu/Tutsi thing?" she asked despairingly. I had to agree. The real problem here is bad leadership. Many people of different races worldwide live together in relative peace and harmony. Australia is a typical example. Racial difference does not automatically lead to bloodshed. Here in Rwanda, we have an evil President who has led an evil regime. He has exploited and abused ethnic differences because of his own fear, cowardice, and greed for power. The Hutu/Tutsi problem is merely a symptom of bad leadership. Indeed, in my experience of the last 16 years, this is the core problem at the heart of all conflict. Bad or evil leadership. If only we could find a way to put the right people in jail.

Churned up and angry about the plight of these children, I got back into the car, and we returned up the hill to Byumba and got permission to proceed to Rutare. While we waited, a well-dressed older man and a fine-looking woman in her thirties came near the car. A soldier told us that they were the family of "the Rwandan minister who was killed" and asked if we would give them a lift into Uganda. This was in the "No way Jose" category for Karen, although she declined with regret. The soldier pressed, commenting that the pair had all the necessary papers and permission from the RPF.

"We cannot", explained Karen. "Last week, a family of five did the same. They had all the permissions, everything. When they got to the border, they were not permitted to pass. The mother and children were left by the road. We cannot accept responsibility for abandoning children by the roadside."

They apologised for asking, and we apologised for declining, and they went off sadly.

Moments later, a minder gave two young women a lift in our vehicle. Karen quizzed them in French and explained that one of the women (I guess they were about 17 or 18) had heard that members of her family were in Rutare. She was anxious to be reunited. The other young woman's story was less happy. All her family was now dead.

About 15 minutes later, we were near Rutare. On the way, we traversed along ridge lines above deep valleys. The sides of every mountain were patchworked with crops of all kinds. Few people worked in the fields. The jungle encroached on the road in many places owing to the lack of traffic. A tea plantation in one valley was being taken over by pretty morning glory. Hilltops that had been cleared of eucalypts were now pink with new growth. "You can't kill them," I said before realising the irony.

Rutare was frightening. Not just because of what it was but of what it could become. Two weeks ago, there were 70,000 people here. Now, there were 105,000, with a large number of new arrivals in the main square. Rutare was a hut city. The huts were made of banana leaves, sticks, and plastic sheeting (most of which were supplied by World Vision). They were spread out over the top of a small mountain. Water was a few kilometres down the mountain at a spring. Women walked down with plastic jerry cans (many supplied by World Vision) and trudged back up the steep slope with the cans on their heads.

One spark and the whole place would go up. The huts were made of tinder-dry banana leaves. They were built so close together that, in many places, it was impossible to walk between them without turning sideways. Mothers had small open fires with cooking pots balanced on three stones. One literal spark from the open fires seemed inevitable. A fire will sweep up the hill. Faced with the rapid arrivals when it was raining and cold, perhaps the officials thought little of the danger of fire when the conditions dried out. And maybe they were just unable to control the hut erection program. As a result, they had a problem that may only be solved by tragedy.

But conflagration was only one of the dangers of 105,000 in such proximity. A spark that could ignite more death was the spark of disease. Measles, against which fortunately many children were already immunised, malaria, cholera or diarrhoea-related diseases could kill many as they leapt from hut to hut. Meningitis had already been identified there.

The camp administrator seemed tired, and I was not surprised. But perhaps his weariness was as much due to the need to tell his story one more time to another visitor as to the heavy, nonstop burdens of leadership in the fastest-growing city on earth.

He said that water was a problem. Later, when we mentioned this to Bob from the Red Cross, he was disparaging. "We and Oxfam have offered to assist, but they will not give us permission to enter the camp." The RPF were in control and wanted everyone to believe it. Such hubris is becoming increasingly common in conflict situations as military forces learn the power of propaganda. They want to position themselves as a conquering army and an effective alternative government. Thus, they must deliver the appearance of competent administration.

One has to say that most people spoke highly of the competence of the RPF administration. Certainly, they often resorted to bureaucracy to control visitors, aid agencies and their own people. Nevertheless, it was clear that they had proper administration and well-thought-out plans for logistics, administration, public relations, propaganda, and fighting the war.

I suggested we go for a walk through the camp. The minder with the Samaritan's Purse cap came with me. We picked our way between the huts. On the ground, banana tree stumps littered the place. This was once a banana plantation. Now, the trees had been transformed into thousands of huts. A few goats were tethered near huts. Pots of beans and maize bubbled over small open fires, inches from flammable huts, their hot contents dangerous for small children who might tip them up.



“May I talk to a family?” I asked the minder.

“Sure” he replied. “Pick anyone.”

I turned to a woman with a child on her hip just to my left. She was “anyone”. Her story was typical of everyone.

Her name was Mukarugwiza. She looked to be in her 20s or 30s. The girl on her hip was 2-year-old Mumailarungu, and another girl standing by our elbows was 8-year-old Tuyisenge. She came from about 15 kilometres away, where they had a small farm. It took them all day to walk to the camp “because of the children.”

“Do you have other children?” we asked.

“I had two others.” She paused for a long time, and we waited. “They were killed in the crossfire.” The other children were aged four and 2½. She did not know where her husband was.

“It’s not easy here”, she explained, “I try to get food for my children, but there are too many people. I tried to go back. I went back for a few days, but we were afraid of the gangs.”

“When can you go back?”

“I don’t know. No-one knows. Maybe someone will tell us when it is safe.”

“Are you a Tutsi or a Hutu?” we asked, realising the awkwardness of the question. Her response demonstrated the difficulty of such a question. She looked away and then down at the ground. She seemed unsure of how to answer. Or whether to answer at all. Finally, she said quietly, “I don’t know.” The safest answer in these politicised times.

We took pictures, gathering the inevitable huge crowd of children and were off to home base along the dusty but well-engineered mountain roads.

Back in Kabale, we discussed the orphanage with Hector as Winnie was in a meeting. On reflection, it seemed that part of the problem might be that the orphanage management task was simply outside Winnie and Rose’s experience. Maybe, while they knew something needed to be done, neither could articulate it enough for the other to take relevant action. Rose would say they needed supplies, and Winnie would say “get supplies”, but there was no clear plan or process. It also became clear that Karen and Steve knew about the lack of response to the orphanage, suggesting that little had happened since Mark Janz left. They had not primed me up, and I was a little angry about that, although at least I got the full force of Rose’s disappointment about World Vision.

I asked Hector if I could use his satellite phone to talk to Relief Vice President Russ about the matter. Hector readily agreed, suggesting that it would be appropriate for him to reschedule his plans to ensure that he could personally concentrate on the orphanage problem for the next week at least. As we left, Winnie arrived, and I discussed the matter with her. She had also talked to Rose after we left and felt disappointed that Rose had not raised the matters with her (Winnie) directly. She was embarrassed to have these matters discussed with me (“the President of Australia”, as she called me) rather than with her. Rose had given us a deadline of Monday to respond with signs of good faith. If we could not, she would ask the German agency SOS to take over, and we could be assigned another orphanage later when we got our act together. As with the rest of us, Winnie preferred to show our good faith.

I said that the orphanage was a key part of the project because it was a simple idea that could be easily communicated to supporters.

“It’s not the whole relief response. Maybe not even the most important part. But it is an easy-to-communicate idea on which we can hang information about our total response. So, we must get this right.” I said.

Hector added, "It is very high profile with the RPF, too. Failure there could damage our reputation with them." Winnie did not seem to need any convincing. She agreed, and we went to call Russ.

I shared this with him, and he talked with Hector, who was glad to have support on this issue from both Russ and me. We needed to focus on this over the next few days and weeks.

Hector's satellite phone was a quantum leap in miniaturisation since the phones we supplied for Somalia. Now truly briefcase-sized (rather than suitcase-sized), it weighed a mere 9 kilos. The lid was the antenna, and they set it up outside their room, pointing at some invisible point in the sky located using a map inside the briefcase. Chalon Lee checked access to the satellite and pronounced it good.

We got through to Russ immediately, and reception was clear, although occasionally distorted as if talking down a long copper pipe. Together, we spoke for a little over ten minutes. The signal finally dropped out just as Hector was saying goodbye. US\$10 a minute, though, is a small investment in the lives of 300 children in the Byumba orphanage. I hope and pray we do not let them down.

### **Sunday 12 June 1994**

My alarm went off at 3.30 am. I woke at 3.10 and waited for it.

Our original plan to catch the 0800 Monday flight to Nairobi had been scuttled by Uganda Airlines when they cancelled the flight. Instead, they scheduled us for the 1700 flight on Monday afternoon. Now we had a problem. Sunday, we could do little if we stayed in Kabale. And Monday could be usefully occupied by a visit to the Uganda office. But the problem would be the rushed connection with my flight out and the need to pick up my suitcase and laundry from the hotel. In theory, the four hours between flights would be enough, but theories are not always fulfilled when travelling. Steve and I decided to leave Kabale at 4 am to get on Sunday's one o'clock flight to Nairobi.

As we arrived at the car blearily, I said, "I think this fits into the *It Seemed Like A Good Idea At The Time* category."

"Even at the time", confessed Steve, "I wasn't real sure."

Our driver, Drake, arrived at 3.50, and we were on the road before four. I worried about bandits for a little while. Many stories had been told about people being stopped by bandits on this road. They didn't usually hurt the passengers. They just stole your money and the car and left you stranded. After 30 minutes in the darkness, we were met and overtaken by a Land Rover with Save the Children markings. Our driver picked up speed to make a convoy. That felt safer.

Once the sun came up around 7, Drake picked up speed. The road was foggy in spots. You could usually see the taillights of the Land Rover in front, but what he could see, we could not imagine. Nor could he, I assumed. I just hoped there would be enough time for Drake's reactions if he hit a cow in the middle of a fog patch. He certainly seemed up to the task.

We stopped briefly for a comfort break just before dawn, and the next few hours sped by in conversation between Steve and me. He seemed interested in stories of being an executive at World Vision, and, unusually, I wanted to talk. I wasn't bored with the sound of my own voice (although I usually am), and I was conscious that most of the conversation was one-way.

We arrived in Kampala around 9 and went to the Equatoriana Hotel, where we hoped to pick up my ticket. It was not there.

We returned to the car so I could get Kofi's phone number and Drake suggested we go to the office. Appreciating local advice, we did this. The guard there said that Irene was coming any minute with our tickets. We figured that Winnie must have called her last night or this morning

to let her know of our change of plans. Sure enough, she turned up soon, got our tickets from her safe, called Uganda Airlines, confirmed seats were available on the one o'clock flight, and dispatched us to the airport with a new driver and car. Meanwhile, Kofi turned up with his two daughters, aged about 12 and 9, cutely dressed in long, colourful Ghanaian dresses. We exchanged greetings briefly and were gone.

On the plane, a proper 737, this time, a woman came at the last moment and sat in her seat by the window. I was in the aisle, and Steve was between us in the middle. The woman was blonde with Olivia Newton-John looks (so I didn't notice her, of course). Steve immediately struck up a conversation, a gift he has even with people who don't look like Olivia. She was Els De Temmerman, Belgian journalist of the year (maybe in Holland, too), for her coverage of Rwanda. We introduced ourselves and included Frank, the German sound assistant on the other side of me with whom Steve had struck up a conversation earlier. He was returning from a documentary assignment in which a German crew took two Mercedes Benz four-wheel drive vehicles on a coast-to-coast safari. He had sprained his ankle two weeks before and, a replacement finally having arrived, he was leaving the cars in Uganda and returning early to base in Nairobi. He and Els knew one another by reputation.

"Yes, I recognise you", Frank said. "I saw you on that video of the Kigale hackings." Frank had edited the video for German TV news out of Nairobi.

Els told us how, although she was a newspaper journalist, she had been thrust into television reporting, which she did not like at all. Frank said she was very good at it. She said she was just there, and she did it.

"There" was in Kigale when a group of Hutu women turned on some Tutsi women, hacking them to death in front of Els and a Belgian TV crew. The experience had drilled its way deep into her psyche. That was clear. She discussed it as if repetition were an important part of catharsis. The resulting video had been shown all over Europe (perhaps the world). Els had suddenly found herself instantly famous, even though she was already a well-known African correspondent for a major Dutch newspaper. She spoke ironically about the power of television to create artificial worthiness (although those are my words, not hers).

Steve mentioned that he had shot the video of the "bodies in the river".

"Oh, I saw that", she replied enthusiastically "That was very good." Els was making no moral judgement about the content of the video, merely about its technical merit. I was reminded of a conversation the day before. An RPF general was describing the discovery of a hundred mutilated corpses in a particular church.

"Have you taken the bodies away?" asked a cameraman.

"Yes, we buried them already."

"Pity about the vision", commented the cameraman quietly.

The general turned on him and spat the words into his face, "Pity about the victims!"

Els spoke disparagingly about the government of Rwanda. She described the power as residing with three brothers-in-law of Habyarimana. One had been killed when forced to fly on the plane, knowing that it would be shot down. Another was now in Canada. No one knew where the third was. She said that her Dutch editor had written a brilliant article setting all this out. She offered to translate it for us, which seemed a most generous offer, and she spoke to me about something troubling her. She seemed so driven, even neurotic. Could it be that she was afraid to stop? Would the weight of all she had experienced one day crush her down and turn this confident, alert, engaging person into an emotional wreck?

The things the government were saying on the radio were frightening and bizarre. They were urging the Hutus to take drugs. Indeed, there was a major drug farm owned by Habyarimana, and the radio urged people to take drugs to build themselves up for the fight against the enemy. The radio assured its listeners that de-toxification hospitals would be provided after the war was won. Such lunacy.

“Whatever the RPF has done,” said Els, “the government is awful and much worse. I never had any trouble with RPF people during my two years of travelling with them. But one time, a government soldier put a gun to my head and said they would rape me. They were drunk. I was only saved by the Red Cross driver with me.”

“I see a lot of Museveni’s ideas in the approach of the RPF,” she said.

“That’s a good thing, isn’t it?” I commented.

“Yes. It is.”

We shared a cab to the hotel, which she took to her flat. She invited us to have a drink with her. She seemed to have a morbid need for company, even though her company was engaging and agreeable. We sent her off, thinking the whole experience rather peculiar.

In the evening, Steve and I went to the Carnivore. I was last there when Rebecca was still field director for Kenya, more than four years ago. We ate beef and pork and lamb. The beef was tough, but the pork and lamb were nice. We also had ostrich (rather like emu), zebra (rather like what I imagine horse would taste like), and hartebeest (forget it); there was crocodile too, but given my allergy to shell-fish I thought it hardly worth the risk. Steve tasted it and agreed it was not worth any risk at all.

We came home in a “taxi” with one working light, a rear seat that slipped forward onto the floor as soon as I sat, no shock absorbers and a loud rattle from the rear suspension. As it turned the corner to the hotel, the engine expired. The driver decided to drive us on the starter motor, but the battery started to fail within metres, and he opened the door to push us and the car towards the hotel. We loudly protested his generosity. Steve pushed money into his pocket, and we fled. Next time, check the taxi before you get in.