

29/6/94
Major Racine, Kigali

K0091057

INCIDENT AT ST-ANDRE COLLEGE
FATHER BLANCHARD ORPHANAGE

On the 8 June 1994, I went to the Kigali prefecture to meet the Sous Prefect who is handling the case of the town orphanages. We had previously discussed the subject the day before with him and also the Prefect of Kigali. Our intention was to visit the different orphanages in order to do an evaluation of their needs, with particular attention to the medical needs. A representative of Pharmaciens sans frontiere was with us at the time of the incident.

We left the prefecture at about 1345 hours to begin our visit according to the itinerary we had planned the day before. This called for an initial visit to the Gisimba orphanage in the Nyamirambo area followed by the orphanage of Father Blanchard at the St-Andre College. The sous prefect of Kigali was leading our convoy through the road blocks of which there were about fifteen manned by armed civilians. Most of them were carrying automatic rifles, grenades and machetes. The first visit at the Gisimba orphanage went very well and we proceeded after a twenty minutes visit to College St-Andre.

At our arrival the area was deserted and we parked our vehicles in the small parking area. At first glance the orphanage appeared deserted. Then Father Otto, a german priest, came to meet us and brought us inside. Once inside we realize that the place had many displaced persons and orphans inside to the extent that it was difficult to move easily. We then met Father Blanchard who immediatly told us that the lives of everyone in the location were in danger. We had the opportunity to talk with him for about five minutes during which time he reported to us that he did not know the number of people in that location because a lot of them had moved in recently in particular, members of the Carmelite order and of the Josephite order. This last group had escaped from a massacre the day before which Father Blanchard said resulted in the deaths of six priests and about seventy five people. At this time our attention was drawn by a report from the prefect's escort, a uniformed guard wearing a yellow beret.

The information concerned a crowd of about 20 to 30 armed civilians/militia outside the orphanage. Capt Nakoura who was accompanying me on the visit suggested to me that we should investigate. We went outside with the sous prefet, the Milobs team and Father Otto. I told the other members of the group, PSF as well as a journalist, to accompany us. The PSF team stayed behind for a short while and after leaving the orphanage Father Otto locked the door as is normal practice there.

Capt Nakoura introduced himself to one of the armed civilians followed by the sous prefet and myself. At the same moment we noticed that the remainder of the group were taking up fire positions around us some using the bushes as cover.

At the same time some of the armed civilians/militia moved behind us in the direction of the locked door to the orphanage. We were still negotiating with the armed persons asking them the

reason for the hostility. Suddenly we heard shots being fired to our rear. We turned and saw that about two or three of the armed persons were firing into the building through the window.

When I looked back the sous prefet and Capt Nakoura had moved behind the armed civilians we were talking to behind the hedgerow such that I couldn't see them initially. I then asked where the sous prefet went and was told the location and I moved to join the sous prefet and Capt Nakoura.

We met with what appeared to be the person in charge. We explained to him the purpose of our visit and after several minutes of trying to get through to him we were told that one of our group had been injured. We told this person that we were going back inside to get our wounded man and proceeded to do so. We got him inside of the vehicle with the assistance of a Josephite priest, the PSF and Father Blanchard, a total of four people carrying the wounded man while Capt Narouka continued negotiating our departure.

Our two vehicles moved to the main road followed by the sous prefet's vehicle and we hit the first roadblock which was adjacent to the parking area which by this time allowed some of the people to move to the area of the roadblock. The guards on the roadblock would not permit us to go through even after explaining that we had a wounded person on board. At that moment a car pulled out on our left and an RGF major that we had not seen in the area got out and told the people on the roadblock to let us pass. The militia argued for about a minute or so until finally the major opened the roadblock himself while still arguing with the militia. The remainder of the route to the ICRC was traversed without incident.

In speaking afterwards with Capt Nakoura he reported what his discussions with the militia determined. He indicated the following:

- a. When the militia saw me leaving the orphanage they noticed that I was Canadian and they were asking if I was General Dallaire. He explained that I wasn't but they then said that I must be one of his gang. There was an obvious anti Canadian feeling expressed by the group in the opinion of Capt Nakoura. He was so concerned about this fact that on the return trip he suggested that all Canadians should remove their flags from their uniforms.
- b. They indicated that the hostility was due to the fact that they thought we had come to evacuate the people in the orphanage.
- c. He noticed also that they were in a particularly hostile mood and some appeared to be heavily under the influence of alcohol.

After delivering the wounded individual to the ICRC, I went back to the Prefecture's office to report the incident and

KOC97058

express my concern about the security of the people that were still at the orphanage.

The prefect indicated that it is normal that the population in the area is hyped up because it is a very intense combat area at this time. Although we had set this up the day before, he mentioned that the problem occurred because he had not been informed of our detailed plan so that he could warn all the various sub leaders/sector commanders of our coming.

I then asked him if he could do anything to protect the people or evacuate them and he indicated that he couldn't but that UNAMIR should come up with a plan.

Upon return to HQ I spoke with LCol Moigny and LCol Rwabalinda and explained to them what happened. I asked LCol Rwabalinda what he could do. He said that he would try to have troops that are already in the area protect the building where the people are located. He also expressed that it would be difficult because there are a lot of troops involved in the fight in the area of Nyarimambu. He suggested that if we want to evacuate them that it would have to be done in one lift. He did not expect that we would be able to get in touch with the civilian authorities which include the prefect of Kigali and other authorities that may be involved before 0900 hrs tomorrow.

K0091059