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Rwanda: where nightmare is reality

Colleen Pohlig
 For the Oregon Daily Emerald

The thin, barely clad boy sits on the dry earth, hugging his knees to his chest and slowly rocking back and forth. His dazed eyes tell his story.

Meanwhile, 1,200 Hutu refugees crouch in the 15 trucks waiting to be taken from here at the Rwanda/Tanzania border some 15 miles from Benaco, now known as the world's largest refugee camp.

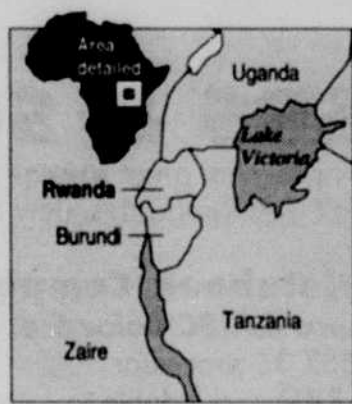
Although the boy's story is like many refugees' — the 10-year-old recently witnessed the massacres of his entire family and escaped alone to the border — there is one major difference: He is a Tutsi.

While he doesn't understand a thing about the bloody war that has made him an orphan or about why Hutus are killing Tutsis and vice versa, he's seen enough to know this one difference can kill him. Thus, he has lied to the other refugees, saying he also is a Hutu.

He once lived peacefully with his Hutu neighbors and friends. Now, we must take him to a small, separate refugee camp for Tutsis, far enough away from Benaco Camp to avoid conflict between the two tribes.

As the bloodletting continues for the third month in this tiny East African country, more than half a million people are feared dead and hundreds of thousands more have fled into neighboring Tanzania, Zaire, Uganda and Burundi.

Our work is like a never-ending nightmare: We empty one impromptu border camp, evacuating thousands to Benaco Camp — which is already bursting with close to 350,000 people —



REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

only to return in a couple of days to find thousands more.

By the time refugees reach the border, we can see intense suffering in their dazed eyes. To say their stories are horrifying is a vast understatement.

They tell of rebel soldiers guarding a particular border point who demand of refugees the equivalent of a dollar to cross into Tanzania. Although a dollar may not sound like a lot, it is when most refugees are farmers and have been on the run since the killings began in early April.

What if you don't have the 500 shillings? Simple — you're bludgeoned or hacked to death.

And one has only to look at the Kagera River, the border of Rwanda and Tanzania, to believe soldiers are capable of hacking the bodies of babies, women and children, as well as men. Scores of bloated bodies bob in the muddy river or are gorily camouflaged against the

rocks.

As we approach one section of the river where body-catching nets had recently been placed, five Rwandan bodies lie wrapped in plastic. Two of them are small children. The workers had pulled them out this morning. And it wasn't even 10 a.m.

When I asked if women or men made up the majority of those retrieved, one man simply said that most of the time it is impossible to tell because they're either beheaded or mutilated beyond identification.

Thus, this winding, once picturesque river now stands as a nightmarish testament to the horrific realities of tribal hatred and the destructive desire for power.

One young man at the border — his skull crisscrossed with several dried panga cuts, a deformed piece of skin grown back to make a sort of shelf where his eyebrow should be — told me of a village just on the Rwandan side where soldiers had recently made their mark.

Only five families remain in what was once a quaint village with about 500 people. As I write these words, a day later, perhaps even those families are no longer alive.

Many refugees tell of burying themselves and their children in holes in the ground, coming out at night only to find food. This is how they live — on the run and in intense fear, most just hoping to make it to the border alive.

And this is no easy task. We walked down to another border crossing where about 200 refugees, hungry and exhausted, waited for their turn on the two

rickety canoes to taxi them the two dozen feet into Tanzania.

The day before, rebel soldiers swept down the steep hillside to the banks of the river and slaughtered the 150 or so waiting refugees on the Rwandan side. The hut on the other side testifies to this, an old man told me, because the soldiers piled most of the bodies inside.

Although we wanted to cross, he said it was too dangerous because soldiers could be watching from the hills, which jet up just from the river. Since they probably would not hesitate to make another murderous sweep, we decided against it.

Just as the young Tutsi boy can't understand how things could go from peaceful one day to a frenzied scene of neighbors killing each other the next, it's nearly impossible for anybody to make sense of the bloody, nonstop madness happening next door to me.

In a world where we neatly organize everything into categories labeled "good" and "bad," where does seeing the butchered bodies of newborns slamming up against the rocks of the Kagera River fit? Or how do we comprehend 9,000 orphaned children in Benaco Camp alone? Or the thousands of terribly scarred and maimed refugees who barely escaped?

In all the confusion, one thing is sure: The bloodletting is far from over, as the stories of recently arriving refugees tell.

But even if the madness stopped tomorrow, the damage done to this once beautiful but always troubled country will show in the eyes and scars of the victims for a long time. That is, of the lucky ones who escaped.

Empty shelves result from packet distribution problems

Tiffany Smith
 Oregon Daily Emerald

Many students seeking class packets at the University Bookstore found empty shelves and long lines for rain checks instead.

According to Chris Standish, coursebook manager at the bookstore, two main factors contributed to the packet distribution problems. First, many professors sent their orders in late. The second problem was due to a long-standing Printing Services policy to produce only 75 percent of the professors' orders.

"The standard number is 75 percent set by the print shop," Standish said. "Both the store and the print shop think that number is too low. We intend to change it."

Katy Kronholm, copyright clearance coordinator, said the process begins with a percentage, 75 percent, then projected, actual and past enrollment is taken into account to come up with the number of packets to run.

"If a professor says 30 and we look in the past and there's only 10, we go with the 10," Kronholm said.

However, she did say that for a number of classes, they will run 100 percent if a professor makes them aware that the class will be full and if past figures show that the packets sold well.

James Terborg, a management professor, says he turned his order in on time. He was not one of the professors who made it a point to have 100 percent of his

order run. In fact, he didn't know that they would print fewer packets than he ordered.

Terborg assigned his 250 management students work from a required packet to be due Thursday the first week of school, assuming there would be no problems with them getting the packets. After receiving an e-mail message from students saying the bookstore was sold out, he did some investigating.

Despite his frustration, he said Kronholm did a great job to rectify the situation. He plans to let them know well in advance that he wants them to print the entire order next time.

"I think it's a little screwy. This whole thing could have been solved if they had done 100 percent," he said.

According to Kronholm, the whole issue of percentages arose because of the move from Campus Copy to the bookstore for distribution.

The distribution at the bookstore is a self-serve setting and students must take the initiative to fill out a rain check.

The reason for moving from Campus Copy to the bookstore was to make shopping for course material easier for students, according to Standish. Distributing at the bookstore allowed for a bar code which could be scanned at the cash registers and students could use credit cards, which they weren't able to do before. He added that there was no change in packet prices.

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