

THE MURDER OF MISSIONARIES IN RHODESIA



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The earliest permanent white residents of Rhodesia were missionaries, and it is significant that their lives were respected by the most warlike of the country's tribes. In an era of generally unbridled savagery, the innate chivalry of primitive warriors and the strict discipline imposed by their leaders seem to have been all that ensured the survival of the devoted little bands of men and women.

Certainly it would be false to suppose that Christian conversion of the indigenous peoples contributed to the security of historical missionary outposts. Where the greatest danger may have seemed to lie among the regimented Matabele conversions were pitifully small.

The conclusion that discipline and rudimentary soldiering qualities did much to preserve the lives of early missionaries seems inescapable.

In the mid-1970s intensification of the terrorist war in Rhodesia led to the increasing vulnerability of missions and their occupants. From religious convictions many staff members continued to go unarmed, and their quarters, clinics, hospitals and schools remained unprotected at their request.

In contrast, other civilians trying to pursue their normal activities in similar areas turned to the offensive or formidably defensive.

By 1976, numbers of missionaries, often acting against official advice, had become dangerously vulnerable. Although it had taken time for the undisciplined terrorist bands to appreciate this exposure of soft targets, it was inevitable that mission establishments and their members would prove irresistible prey for well-armed cowards.

There appears to have been no logic behind the attacks which followed apart from that of the terrorists' overweening

concern for their own safety. Often incapable of the resolve to assault defended buildings or even armed individuals, attention was turned to the undefended and the unarmed. It is doubtful if the basic political indoctrination to which the communist terrorists had been subjected could be held responsible for many of the attacks, despite the anti religious content of that teaching.

Before any missionaries were killed in Rhodesia there were isolated instances of individual terrorist leaders demonstrating anti- religious views. A piece of rhetoric, left at the scene of an unsuccessful bridge demolition near a mission, closed with the words "Down with Christ."

Subsequent to the first killings, in May 1977, a terrorist leader told missionaries: "If the Jews had not killed Christ, I would have done it myself."

Other missionaries were told by terrorists not to mention Christ and His resurrection in the course of preaching. It has been pointed out that this restriction is ominously akin to similar impositions made upon the Russian churches. In another incident, the Roman Catholic Church was described as representing the evils of capitalism.

In other instances, raids upon missions may have been provoked by those particular establishments failing to give what the terrorists considered adequate assistance.

It is well known that some missions have helped terrorists, the motive sometimes being, presumably, a belief in the moral right of terrorists - more often a belief that assistance will result in the mission being left undisturbed and the staff permitted to continue their work after a black government comes to power.

In the main however, the professionally meek and gentle were seen by the terrorists to be unprotected. Therefore, they were safe to murder, rape and expose to brutality of the most vicious kind imaginable.

The deliberate selection of white missionaries may sometimes have had its origins in a wishful attempt to intimidate other whites. But the availability of defenceless victims in remote areas was clearly the most attractive facet.

Missionaries have been murdered not so much for their faith - but because they were easy to murder. Their deaths are a tragic commentary on the arrant cowardice of "freedom fighters" and the inept leadership of those utterly undisciplined terrorists.

FATHER JEORGER

Father George Jeorger (42) from Switzerland, belonged to the Roman Catholic Order of Bethlehem, and worked at Bondolfi Mission in the Fort Victoria area.

On November 25, 1976, he left his mission and drove to Mashati Township in the Mshawasha Purchase Area. Here - worried about the risk from landmines laid by terrorists - he set off on a bicycle to visit villages and smaller missions in the region.

He was due to have preached at a local church on December 5, but did not appear. The authorities were told and investigations disclosed rumours that he had been murdered by terrorists.

No trace has been found of Father Jeorger, whose name was incorrectly spelled "Oreger" in early reports.

On December 22, 1976, a young terrorist was captured by security forces in the Nyajena Tribal Trust Land, which adjoins the purchase area in which Father Jeorger had vanished.

During his trial in September, 1977, the terrorist claimed he had overheard a terrorist leader named Taurai say the priest had been murdered.

Documents recovered at the scene of the young terrorist's surrender indicated that Father Jeorger had been abducted by a terrorist gang and tried by a kangaroo court.

Despite the fact that the priest was well liked in the area, the documents listed various unsubstantiated "crimes" he was supposed to have committed. These were headed in the documents as "Accounts".

A terse note at the end of the "Accounts" stated: "All these accounts and many others make him liable for a death penalty."

There are certain parallels between the case of Father Jeorger and Father Desmond Paul Donavan, a 50-year-old Jesuit who was abducted near Salisbury on January 15, 1978. While the motor cycle he was riding was later found buried, no further trace of Father Desmond has been discovered.

BISHOP SCHMITT AND HIS COMPANIONS

On December 5, 1976, a terrorist ambushed and killed the 71-year-old former Roman Catholic Bishop of Bulawayo, the Rt. Rev. Adolf Schmitt. Also killed in the same incident was a priest, Father Possenti Weggarten, and a nun, Sister Maria Francis van den Berg. The murders took place on a lonely dirt road near Lupane.

First reports of the incident were summed up in a national newspaper next day:

The only survivor of the ambush was Sister Ermenfried Knauer, who was brought to Bulawayo last night and is recovering at the Mater Dei Hospital.

She was shot in the left leg as she sought shelter under the bishop's car.

There was a stunned silence among worshippers at St. Mary's Cathedral during the 6 p.m. mass yesterday when news of the murders was announced from the pulpit by the parish priest, Father Elmar Mayr.

Dr. Johanna Davis, medical superintendent of St. Luke's Mission Hospital, who led the Police to the scene of the murders, and later brought Sister Ermenfried to Bulawayo by ambulance, last night recounted Sister Ermenfried's eyewitness story.

She said that the bishop's party were driving from their home mission, Regina Mundi, to St. Luke's Mission to visit a sick friend.

On the road between Gwaai siding and the main Falls road a terrorist held them up and demanded money.

According to Dr. Davis, Sister Ermenfried said: "We told him we had no money with us, that we were missionaries just out for the afternoon.

"We said, 'If you really need money, come back with us to the mission and we will help you'."

The terrorist replied that as we had no money he would have to shoot us. He began gunning us down, starting with the bishop. He riddled him with bullets. Then he mowed down the others."

Sister Ermenfried said she presumed the terrorist thought she, too, was dead. He fired at her leg which was protruding from under the car.

According to Sister Ermenfried, the terrorist was wearing a balaclava and camouflage uniform and carrying a machine-gun.

The Catholic Bishop of Bulawayo, the Rt. Rev. Henry Karlen, who succeeded Bishop Schmitt, said: "It is unbelievable."

He said he had told an African who was returning to the Geneva conference to give a message to Mr. Robert Mugabe and Mr. Joshua Nkomo.

The message was: "Tell those two gentlemen what has happened and that I said, 'This is the reward for our work for Africans for working for them all our lives'."

The murders coincided with the ill-fated Geneva conference, and a newspaper report outlines reaction:

Charges and counter-charges over the murders overshadowed the work of the settlement conference in Geneva yesterday.

Two nationalist organizations - the Patriotic Front alliance and Bishop Abel Muzorewa's ANC - blamed the Rhodesian Army's Selous Scouts for the killings, while the Government delegation said the terrorist action should be taken as a warning about the future, Iana reports.

Mr. Mark Partridge, Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, told reporters, when asked about the

nationalist allegations: "If you believe that, you will believe anything."

Mr. Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union said in a statement last night that it was "preposterous for us to be accused of murdering civilians".

The incident was clearly an embarrassment to the nationalist delegation at Geneva. A reporter summed-up by writing:

Their vehement denial of terrorist involvement and the blame they have placed on Rhodesian security forces are being regarded with utter disbelief by most foreign journalists.

The only survivor of the massacre, Sister Ermenfried Knauer, said later that she would be prepared to accept the offer of a Rhodesian farmer to fly her to Geneva - where she could give evidence of the attack to any interested parties.

A Press report stated:

The wounded nun, Sister Ermenfried Knauer said she was not in a fit condition to travel at the moment. She said there was no doubt in her mind that the attack was carried out by a terrorist.

She dismissed black nationalist allegations made in Geneva that the atrocity was carried out by Rhodesian security forces.

Interviewed in hospital the sister recounted the events of the terrorist attack. She said the terrorist twice shouted out the slogan "missionaries are enemies of the people" before he gunned down the missionaries.

She said the terrorist was unable to look his victims in the eye as he was pulling the trigger and it was apparent that he had been taught anti-missionary slogans as part of his training.

On December 10, 1976, it was announced in the Press that Sister Knauer would not be permitted to visit Geneva:

Sister Ermenfried Knauer, the nun who survived a terrorist attack in Lupane on Sunday, will not be going to Geneva after all because her Mother General will not give permission.

And last night the farmer who made the offer to pay Sister Ermenfried's fare said he was very disappointed with the Mother General's decision, and asked if there was no higher authority that could reverse her order.

"I want this nun to go to Geneva," he said, "I want her to confront the people there and tell them the truth about what happened to her."

Mother Adelberta Reinhart, the Mother General of the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood, said yesterday: "We are not going to enter into politics. They have more to do at Geneva now than talk to Sister Ermenfried. I would not allow her to go."

Asked why Sister Ermenfried had said in an RTV-RBC interview at Mater Dei Hospital on Wednesday that she would go to Geneva, the Mother General said: "I think she only meant she is ready to give an answer."

The farmer said: "I would like to remind the Mother General of my favourite quotation, 'All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing'."

ST. PAUL'S MASSACRE, MUSAMI

During the night of February 7, 1977, seven white Roman Catholic missionaries were murdered by terrorists. They included four nuns. A newspaper report set out the story as follows:

In what the sole survivor described as a senseless, insane and brutal act, nationalist guerrillas last night gunned down seven white Roman Catholic missionaries, including four nuns.

Father Dunstan Myerscough, who is 65, said today that he had escaped by throwing himself to the ground as the guerrillas opened fire from five yards range.

Father Myerscough said he was in no doubt that the killers were nationalist guerrillas, although they had uttered hardly a word before shooting the helpless missionaries.

The Dominican nuns who died were Sister Joseph Wilkinson (58), from Lancashire, and three West Germans - Sister Epiphany Schneider (71) and Sister Ceslaus Stiegler (59), both from Bavaria, and Sister Magdela Lewandowski (42) from Kiel.

The male Missionaries killed were Jesuits - Father Christoher Sheperd-Smith (33), a Briton born in East Africa, Father Martin Thomas (45), from London, and lay Brother John Conway (57), from Tralee, Ireland.

A Jesuit spokesman said that Brother John, who had worked for the Church in Rhodesia for 23 years, had virtually built the mission "with his bare hands".

Father Myerscough, who is British, said that when the guerrillas arrived at the mission they began rounding up the white staff. "They appeared to ignore the black staff and sisters," he said.

The group of eight was taken a short distance from the mission block, where the guerrillas then argued in the vernacular as to whom would do the shooting, he said. "Finally, three of them turned on us and raised their guns. When the shooting started the others ran away."

We didn't know they were going to shoot us until the firing started. I threw myself on the ground. When the firing stopped I looked up and saw that the other seven were dead and that there was nothing I could do for them."

Rhodesian forces are hunting the guerrillas, whom the authorities say belong to Mr. Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). A police spokesman said the group was believed responsible for a series of incidents, including the murder of several black civilians.

Police said today they had recovered more than 100 cartridge cases fired from Russian-made rifles and a machine-gun.

FATHER DIAZ

The battered, mutilated body of Father Jose Manuel Rubio Diaz was discovered near a mission station in south-eastern Rhodesia. Father Diaz, who was 58, was born in Spain, and had worked in Rhodesia for 28 years.

ST. PAUL'S MISSION, LUPANE

Drunken terrorists were responsible for the deaths of two white women missionaries on March 10, 1977.

A summary of the murders appeared in the *Guardian* (London):

Two white Roman Catholic missionaries, both women, were shot dead by black nationalist guerrillas yesterday at St. Paul's mission in the Lupane district of south-western Rhodesia.

A group of eight guerrillas entered the mission, in remote bush country, yesterday afternoon, threatening the black staff and nurses and demanding money from Dr. Johanna Decker (59) and Sister Ann Ploner (53). German born Dr. Decker had been in Rhodesia for 28 years, and Sister Ploner, born in Austria, but a South African national, volunteered for missionary work in Rhodesia six months ago.

The guerrillas found Dr. Decker and Sister Ploner in the mission dispensary, and demanded money. Dr. Decker gave them the contents of the cash box but they said it was not enough. She said she had more at her house and was apparently shot down on her way to collect it. Mission staff said about R\$400 (about £400) had been stolen during the attack, in which the insurgents assaulted the black mission staff, threatened the nurses with rape, and ordered the 130 patients from their beds.

Another nun, Sister Damiane Drechsler (43) escaped death by hiding. She said she was sewing when the guerrillas arrived and she saw Dr. Decker pass her window at gunpoint. A few seconds later she heard the rattle of automatic weapons, followed soon afterwards by another burst in which Sister Ploner died, her body being riddled with eight shots.

Rhodesian forces are hunting the insurgents, who are believed to have mounted Saturday's attack against the nearby Regina Mundi mission in which an Austrian-born building contractor, Mr. Rudi Kogler, was killed after he had shot dead an insurgent leader.

According to St. Paul's mission staff, the guerrillas spent several hours at a nearby beer-hall before entering the mission, which is surrounded by a security fence.

Another report, filed by A. J. McIlroy, was published in the *Daily Telegraph* (London):

I drove into the bush in a five-vehicle armed convoy to see at first hand the devastation, the heartbreak and the reality of the latest atrocity, this time in an area where Mr. Nkomo's ZAPU are operating.

Mr. Nkomo, and Mr. Mugabe of ZANU, have been making terrorist attacks against civilian targets, and the latest victims yesterday were Dr. Johanna Maria Decker, 59, of Munich, killed by a single shot, in St. Paul's mission, near Lupane, on the Bulawayo-Wankie road; and Sister Ferinanda Ploner, 53, an Austrian.

Sister Ploner's body was riddled by eight shots fired in a burst by the terrorists soon after they had shot down Dr. Decker.

The two were among five whites at the mission, including the father and a monk in charge of a staff of 42 Africans looking after 130 black patients at the mission hospital.

Forty of the women patients were in the maternity wards and among those who fled included women in labour who had their babies within hours in the bush.

In a matter of 30 minutes a thriving hospital and a mission, including children nearby, was turned into a deserted compound behind the wire security fencing, leaving behind only three children, one a premature baby and the others in a ward where there had been a number of mentally retarded African children.

There was only one gun at the mission. It was used by the father to slaughter pigs and cows for food. So unprepared were they and so sure of the love and affection which the local community had shown for them, and particularly Dr. Decker, that none of the staff even knew, or could remember, where the gun was kept.

The atrocity by what were known to be a party of at least six black African terrorists bring the number of Roman Catholic missionaries killed in the last nine months to 13.

Sister Ploner was serving with the Order of the Precious Blood and last night the Order was deciding what to do about the mission; whether to try to reopen it or find some other way of helping the local community.

Clutching a key and padlock in her hand, after opening a security gate to the main building in the mission complex, Sister Damiane Drechsler, 43, from Heidelberg, who has been six years at the mission and came to Rhodesia in 1959, told visiting correspondents the sequence of events.

She said that while she had been sewing she saw two of the terrorists leading Dr. Decker at gunpoint just outside the window of her room.

Shortly afterwards she heard a "shattering" noise which she realized later was the shot which killed the doctor at a tree where she had been taken.

Shortly afterwards, a further 200 yards away, there was a burst of shooting and Sister Ploner had been murdered.

At one stage they found an African nurse who was leaving the linen closet in the main hospital building and after saying "What are you doing here?" they pushed her on the floor and slapped her.

Asked about Dr. Decker, she said: "She was the kindest person we have ever known. She has worked all over this area and had many remote missions who will miss her. She was devoted to the cause and had never hesitated to sacrifice herself in her work for the Africans, who in turn had grown to love her.

"It was when they saw that she of all people had been shot dead by these men that they ran in panic and some didn't even stop to collect their babies."

THE REV. AND MRS. BRAND

On October, 23, 1977, the Reverend Andries Louw Brand (40) and his wife Tabina Metje Brand (41) were killed in a terrorist ambush. They were murdered while returning to their home in Que Que, after celebrating communion in the

Gokwe area. Mr. Brand belonged to the clergy of the Dutch Reformed Church.

They left six children.

BROTHERS GEYERMANN AND VON ARX

The next murder of missionaries by terrorists took place on the night of June 2, 1978. Two Catholic Brothers, German-born Pieter Geyermann and Swiss-born Andrew von Arx - aged 36 and 45 respectively - were killed by gunfire at the Embakwe mission school, close to the Botswana border.

"It was definitely a terrorist attack," Father Angelmar Dylong of the mission was quoted as saying. The father was wounded in the same murderous assault.

The attack had the effect of closing the school, which had served 250 students.

SALVATION ARMY KILLINGS

Five days later, on June 7, 1978, terrorists raided the Salvation Army Usher Institute. Christopher Munnion reported for the *Daily Telegraph*:

Two British women mission teachers were shot dead and two other missionaries wounded in a cold-blooded raid by Rhodesian guerrillas on a Salvation Army institute near Figtree, 20 miles south-west of Bulawayo, it was disclosed yesterday.

The two women who died were Miss Charon Faith Swindells, 25, from Bangor, Co. Down, and Miss Diane Barbara Thompson, 28, from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, whose parents live in Goldhawk Road, Shepherd's Bush.

They were killed instantly when a 15-strong gang of guerrillas, members of Mr. Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army opened fire indiscriminately on a group of missionaries. Injured in the shooting were Miss Gunvor Berit Polsson, 37, from Malmo, Sweden, and Mr. David Cotton, 38, from Atherstone, Warwickshire, whose family lives at Hadleigh, Essex.

The guerrillas arrived at the Salvation Army's Usher Institute, a sprawling mission, on Wednesday night.

Col. Ken Ramsey of the Salvation Army said the guerrillas sought out mission staff house by house and started to march six of them towards the house of the principal, Maj. Jean Caldwell, a Londoner.

"They never got to the principal's house. The guerrillas must have been disturbed by something for they suddenly started to scatter into the bush", Col. Ramsay said.

"Before they did so, they opened fire indiscriminately and hit four of the captives."

Col. Ramsay said Mr. Cotton had been shot in the legs and Miss Polsson, the school vice-principal, was shot in the back. Their condition last night was said to be satisfactory.

The teachers' deaths brought to 20 the number of missionaries killed in Rhodesia's 5 1/2-year-old war.

The Usher Institute is close to the border with Botswana and 30 miles from the Roman Catholic Embakwe mission where two priests, one from West Germany, the other from Switzerland, were shot dead by guerrillas last Friday.

According to police, the weapons used in the latest mission killings were assault rifles of the type supplied to Mr. Nkomo's army by the Soviet Union.

MR. ARCHIE G. DUNAWAY

On June 15, at Sanyati Mission, terrorists murdered a Southern Baptist evangelist - Mr. Archie G. Dunaway (58).

Mr. Dunaway was married, with four children, and came from the United States of America.

THE ELIM MISSION MASSACRE

On the night of June 23, 1978, Elim Mission in the Rhodesian Eastern Highlands was subjected to the worst massacre of missionaries yet experienced. Terry Blocksidge reported in the *Sunday Mail* (Salisbury):

Eight British missionaries and four young children - including a three-week-old baby - were bayoneted to death by terrorists on Rhodesia's Eastern border on Friday night in the worst massacre of whites since the six-year-old war began.



Three of the missionaries were men and the others women.

A sixth woman was stabbed and beaten and left for dead. She staggered 300 m into the freezing Vumba bush to spend the night before being found semi-conscious by security forces yesterday. Despite intensive care in a Salisbury hospital she subsequently died.

The gruesome murders, by a group of eight to 10 terrorists, happened at Emmanuel Mission School - 15 km south-east of Umtali and 8 km from the Mozambique border - once used as the Eagle boarding school.

The dead, who belonged to the Elim Pentecostal Church, were:

- * Mr. Peter McCann (30), his wife, Sandra (also 30), son Phillip (six) and daughter Joy (five).
- * The Rev. Phillip Evans (29), his wife, Suzan (35), and their daughter Rebecca (four).
- * Mr. Roy Lynn (37), his wife, Joyce (36), and their daughter Pamela Grace. She would have been three weeks old yesterday.
- * Catherine Picken (55) and Elizabeth Wendy Hamilton- White (37).
- * Miss Mary Fisher (28).

Most of the women had been sexually assaulted, and one mutilated.

The children had been dragged from their beds. Two children were in yellow pyjamas, one with a red dressing gown, and a third in a flowery nightdress.

One child had her tiny thumbs clenched in her palms.

Even hardened security men were stunned by the bloody scene and stood around silently. "The quiet is uncanny", said one.

Mr. Brian Chapman, director of the Church in Rhodesia and South Africa, visited the scene yesterday. He said: "We saw no humanity here."

The massacre began shortly before 8.30 p.m. when the white families were forced by the terrorists from their homes and classrooms, and marched to a playing field.

Near the sports pavilion, about 400 m from the main school, they were split into groups, then beaten with lengths of wood and logs, and stabbed.

When security forces reached the scene yesterday, the full horror on the cold, mist-and-rain shrouded Vumba mountainside confronted them:

A mother, beaten to death, lay with her young baby. The baby had also been savagely beaten.

Their arms stretched out to each other, their hands resting an inch apart. The child's hand was clenched.

The mother had a hand squeezed tightly around her engagement ring, turned into her palm, as she reached for her baby in her dying moments.

Nearby, another woman had died from an axe-wound - the weapon still protruded from her shoulder - and two men, one with his hands tied behind his back, lay beaten and slashed to death.

A blood-soaked chunk of wood had been dropped near to them.

Three children lay in a pitiful huddle, with two women's bodies next to them.

Some had raised their arms to defend themselves from the brutal blows.

The reactions of the media in general were predictable, with many newspapers being singularly outspoken. *The Citizen* of South Africa had this to say on June 26:

Non-violence in many ways is being practised by the Patriotic Front. I asked one of their commanders, Tongogara, what they actually do in Rhodesia, and he said they're not doing much fighting, except when they are fired upon, or when the Rhodesian defence forces find them and try to run them out.

"Basically what they are doing is moving around the villages and conducting political seminars and singing songs."

So says Mr. Andrew Young, United States Ambassador to the United Nations, in a recent interview with the London Times.

This weekend, in the worst atrocity committed against white civilians in the history of Rhodesia's six-year war, terrorists of Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe National Liberation Army hacked and battered to death almost the entire white staff and their families at the Elim Pentacostal Mission in the Eastern border mountains.

Mr. Young is asked: "Does Mr. Mugabe strike you as a violent man?"

He replies: "Not at all, he's a very gentle man. In fact, one of the ironies of the whole struggle is that I can't imagine Joshua Nkomo, or Robert Mugabe, ever pulling the trigger on a gun to kill anyone. I doubt that they ever have.... The violent people are Smith's people and hopefully they won't be around for the new Zimbabwe."

This weekend, when local and international journalists arrived at the scene of the massacre 15 km from Umtali and less than 7 km from the Mozambique border, the mutilated and blood-stained bodies of three men, four women and five children - including a three-week-old baby - were lying as they had been found that morning.

Mr. Young is asked how he gets on with Mr. Mugabe.

He replies: "I find that I am fascinated by his intelligence, by his dedication. The only thing that frustrates me about Robert Mugabe is that he is so damned incorruptible.... The problem is he was educated by the Jesuits, and when you get the combination of a Jesuit and a Marxist kind of philosophy merging in one person, you've got a hell of a guy to deal with."

This weekend, one of the newspapermen who flew to the scene of the massacre reported: "The bodies lay in clusters round the school's cricket pavilion. The victims had all been foully abused. All but one of the four adult women had been raped and left semi-naked on the grass."

Mr. Young tells of the "deep-seated humanism" of a young man who told him: "I started killing at 14 and when you kill and when you realize you could be killed for something that you believe in, you learn that there's nothing more precious and valuable than human life."

This weekend, at the scene of the massacre, correspondents reported that the "victims were beyond help, with axe wounds scarring their bodies, bayonet thrusts deep in their backs, and skulls crushed by knobkerries or lengths of thick wood.

Shocked and angry troops viewed the carnage and quietly cursed the terrorists. One man had tears in his eyes as he muttered: "The bastards. They are nothing better than animals. How could they do this?" "

Yet these are the terrorists whom men like Andy Young support.

The tragedy of Africa is not just that such savagery still persists.

It is that terrorism has been given respectability. That the men with the guns are regarded as freedom fighters, as liberators, when they are no more than thugs and animals.

When will the World Council of Churches appreciate that it must stop aiding men who kill and maim the innocents?

When will our local political priests accept that it is time to condemn, instead of support, such forces of evil?

When will Mr. Andy Young and people like him realize that every man, woman or child who dies at Elim or at Kolwezi, or anywhere else on this dark continent, is a victim of insensate hate and barbarism?

When will they back the forces of peace, of tolerance, of goodwill, instead of supporting the brutal and beastly terrorists?

FATHER RICHERT AND BROTHER LISSON

On June 29, 1978, the murder of two more Roman Catholic missionaries was described in the Rhodesian national press:

Two German-born missionaries, Father Gregor Richert (48) and Brother Bernhard Lisson (68), who between them had served in Rhodesia for nearly 60 years, were shot in cold blood by a small group of terrorists near their quarters at St. Rupert's Mission, 60 km north-west of Hartley, on the afternoon of June 27, 1978.

The murders were confirmed late yesterday afternoon by Combined Operations Headquarters, Iana reports. The regional supervisor of the German Jesuits in the Sinoia area, Father Ulbrich, said in Sinoia that there was no apparent reason for the killings.

"Was there a reason for the Vumba massacre?" he asked, referring to the murders last week of eight British missionaries and four of their children who were hacked and battered to death in the Eastern Highlands, reports Iana.

Father Ulbrich travelled to Sinoia from Salisbury yesterday to inquire into the deaths of his two colleagues. He said the two men were "extremely dedicated" to their work in the small, isolated mission and hospital complex not far from Sanyati, where they had made their homes for more than five years.

Father Ulbrich said he believed three terrorists had committed the murders. He understood the small group of armed men had taken the two missionaries from the central mission complex to their quarters before shooting them.

He said although terrorists were known to have an active presence in the area, he could think of no reason why St. Rupert's Mission had been singled out. "It's like so many other cases," he said. "It just seems to be indiscriminate."

The Director of all Catholics in the Sinoia area, Monsignor Helmut Reckter, said his Jesuit organization had

no plans to withdraw the 16 missions left in operation.

Asked why the murderers should have chosen helpless and dedicated missionaries as their target, Monsignor Reckter said: "It's extremely difficult to give an answer to this. I don't understand it. It is, of course, a very hateful business. There is no reason that makes sense to me."

He said the 40-bed mission hospital, which catered for local tribesmen over a wide area, had already been closed.

Reporting the murders in more detail, a communique from Combined Operations Headquarters said last night a sum of money was taken by the terrorists when they left in the late afternoon, and shots were fired into a mission vehicle.

Three armed ZIPRA terrorists entered the mission and demanded to see the priest in charge. Father Richert was seen by them and went with the terrorists to Brother Lisson's quarters," the communique said.

Both the victims were then forced to return to Father Richert's house, which they entered together with the terrorists. Their servant was told to leave.

Shortly afterwards a single shot was heard, then three shots followed by a burst of automatic fire.

RED CROSS TEAM

The International Committee of the Red Cross, although it does not sponsor missionaries, is an organization respected and admired throughout the world for its humanitarian work. Its emblem - a red cross emblazoned on a white background - is universally recognized as a badge of neutrality, affording its delegates free and safe access to any war zone on missions of mercy.

But this meant nothing to a Rhodesian terrorist gang. They ambushed the clearly-marked vehicle of a three-man Red Cross team as they drove along a rough mountain track in the remote eastern highlands of Rhodesia.

The two ICR delegates in the vehicle, Mr. Andre Tieche and Mr. Alain Bieri - both in their early 30s and both from Switzerland - and their black translator, Mr. Charles Chatora, had no chance to escape the murderous fire.

After the murders, the bodies were robbed of valuables, and even their shoes were taken. The pockets of their clothing were turned out to ensure nothing had been missed.

The team were returning from a clinic after assessing the medical needs of local people. In the back of their truck was a bale of blankets for distribution to the needy.

Red Cross members never carry arms.

EVIDENCE

Despite outraged protestations of innocence by the externally-based terrorist leaders - at Geneva and since - that their people were responsible for the murders, a wealth of unchallengeable evidence to the contrary has been amassed.

The sworn evidence of missionary survivors has been backed by ballistic science and the written testimony of a well-known terrorist killed in a contact.

Chief Inspector David Perkins, a ballistics expert with the British South Africa Police at the time of Musami Mission massacre of February 7, 1977, testified at the inquest that an AK rifle bearing the number 3036, of North Korean manufacture, had been proved under microscopic examination to be one of the weapons used in the slaying.

A notebook found on the body of a terrorist, Mombi Macheni, contained the following passage:

On Sunday the day of 6/2/77 we went to Musami at St Paul's Mission. We reached there at 9.15 and we had a storming raid. We shot four Europeans who were priests. Sisters were five, and altogether there were nine, eight dead.

We took a watch only. No comrades were injured in the action.

On the same day we went to Mazvidva and killed informers, kraalhead and the other one. This was 12.15, then we went.

Nobody was injured. We were very happy.

The entry in the notebook was signed by "No Talks" Mabhena. Beside his name was the number 3036.

At the inquest, Father Myerscough was asked whether he had any doubt that the murders had been committed by terrorists He replied: "None whatever in my mind."

The inquest verdict recorded by regional magistrate Mr Timothy Cherry: "Multiple, homicidal gunshot wounds" fired by a terrorist group.

COUNTER CLAIMS

Whenever the undisciplined terrorist groups commit some particularly brutal act, their leaders parrot the same response.

Unable to control their gangs, frequently out-of-touch and seldom in any sort of real control, the leaders attempt to shift the responsibility to the Rhodesian security forces.

But each victim of the terrorists is treated by the authorities as exactly what he or she - black or white - happens to be - a victim of murder.

Repeatedly the world ignores the evidence.

In the light of this asinine cold-shouldering of irrefutable fact, it is probably in vain to expect any logic to prevail. But what logical mind could accept that there has been a series of savage set-pieces, staged by Rhodesian forces?

Already the world has adequate proof of the apathetic international reactions to horror in Rhodesia. Politicians, opinion formers and church bodies pay little more than lip-service to the conventions when forced to comment on some new atrocity perpetrated by the terrorists.

Since the reaction is so peurile, would there be any rational purpose in stage-managing repeat performances - fraught with the danger of discovery or betrayal?

Would any contrived "massacre" be worthwhile - in terms of cold cynicism - if all that could be expected was an assurance from Dr. David Owen that he would speak to Mr. Mugabe when next they met?

Ministry of Information
Rhodesia
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