

Joy in the Harvest

500,000 MASSACRED — ANOTHER 2,000,000 LEFT HOMELESS

Lowell Wertz visits Rwandan refugee camp, "The most terrible things I have ever seen"

"These were the most terrible things I have ever seen," missionary Lowell Wertz declared in a recent telephone call from Africa. "There were countless people standing, sitting and laying in a muddy field. They didn't have enough to eat. Many were sick. When you looked into their eyes, you sensed the horror that they had witnessed."

Lowell Wertz was describing the scene at the Tanzania-Rwanda border where, in a 24 hour period, more than 250,000 refugees had fled the bloodbath in Rwanda.

The migration was so intense that, according to *Time Magazine*, in just one day the camp became Tanzania's second largest city.

In the past several months, tribal warfare in Rwanda has resulted in at least 500,000 deaths. (This deathcount is 10 times the total number of U.S. losses during the entire Viet Nam War.) The U.S. Ambassador to Rwanda described the butchery—involving machetes—as "inhumane" and "ghastly." According to *Time*, in the Rwandan capital of Kigali, "Toddlers lay sliced in half, and mothers with babies strapped to their backs sprawled dead in the streets."

Speaking by phone with his parents in Illinois,

Lowell Wertz described the scene at the border, where two nations are divided by the Kagera River. In Tanzania, more than a quarter million refugees struggle to survive hunger and disease. Across the river, in Rwanda, soldiers stand at their posts, blocking another 250,000 Rwandans seeking safety in Tanzania. In between the two nations, spanning

the river, is a bridge which the fleeing refugees crossed.

Officials permitted Wertz to go out onto the bridge. There, he saw these "most terrible things." He saw numerous bodies floating down the river. (Officials estimate that upstream the Rwandan military is dumping 5,000



Every day, thousands of bodies float down the Kagera River.

to 10,000 bodies into the river every day.) Wertz stated, "As the bodies float down the river, they are hurled over waterfalls and become lodged along the shores."

The United Nations and the Red Cross are taking the lead in meeting the humanitarian needs, Wertz reported. "I believe that *Joy in the Harvest* must also get involved. Our African pastors are anxious to share Christ's love, witness, pray with and counsel these suffering people."

An excerpt from a recent letter from Lowell Wertz explains the causes of the Rwanda tragedy and a similar crisis in the neighboring country of Burundi:

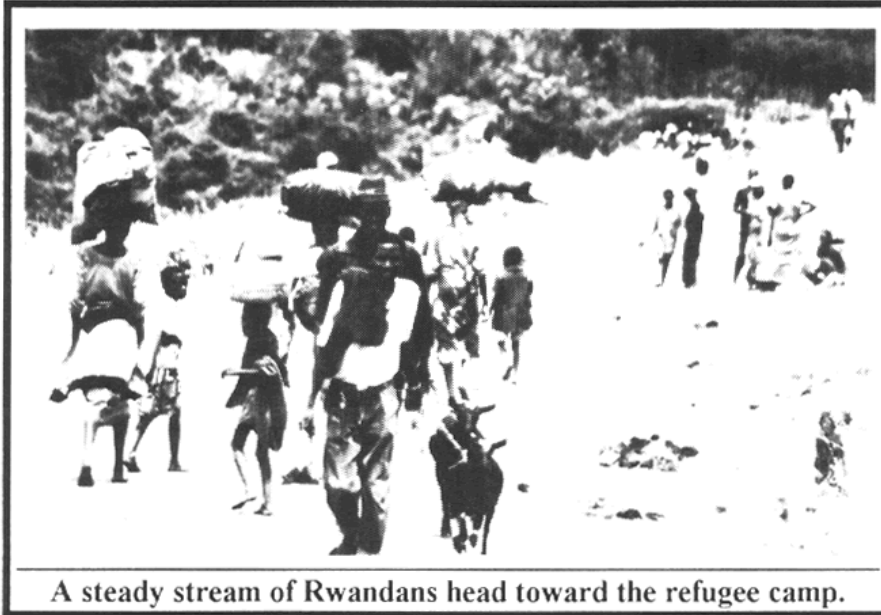
"The ethnic situations in Burundi and Rwanda are quite similar. Two tribes in each country—the Tutsi and the Hutu—are killing each other. The Tutsi are in the minority (about 15%) but control the military in Burundi. Last year in Burundi they held the first ever free election of a President. A Hutu won. He was only in office a few months when an aborted aborted coup killed him and members of his cabinet. That is when the entire country went up for grabs. Ordinary citizens began killing members of the opposing tribe. They entered into killing with a vengeance.

"After the renewed bloodshed in Burundi, the President of Tanzania called for a regional conference of many Presidents of the nations of Africa. The summit was held in the capital of Tanzania—Dar Es Salaam. After the meeting, the Presidents of Burundi and Rwanda boarded a plane for Kigali, Rwanda. Less than three miles from the airport at Kigali, the airplane crashed. It was assumed that the plane was shot down by a missile. Both Presidents and all others on the plane died.

"In the aftermath of the crash, Burundi has remained relatively quite, but Rwanda has gone up for grabs. Rebel soldiers have launched an offensive to take the city of Kigali. Reports indicate that tens of thousands have been killed. [Since this letter was sent, the United Nations has estimated that the deaths in Rwanda have surpassed 500,000.] The new government in Rwanda, which was organized after the President's death, has not been recognized by the rebel forces. The rebels have entered the capital, and government officials have fled.

"The atrocities are beyond imagination. The head of the United Nations peacekeepers reports that it is "demons in the form of human beings performing the most unimaginable act of

cruelty that one can conceive." Mass killings are occurring. The people in Kigali are hiding in their houses because the streets are dangerous with not only the shooting war but also gangs of youths with axes and machetes killing and stealing at random. Foreigners have been evacuated by French troops.



A steady stream of Rwandans head toward the refugee camp.

"Our work with the Burundi refugees continues. We have seen many turn to Christ. In the last few weeks, we have seen many come to Christ, and we are now opening a new church in the Kigwa refugee area. I hope to begin digging a water well there in the next few weeks. The water shortage

is critical in that area, creating much hardship."

You Can Help !

In addition to its on-going programs and projects, *Joy in the Harvest* desires to assist, witness, pray with and counsel refugees. During his recent telephone call from Africa, Lowell stated, "We really need help! Every gift will make such a big impact."

If you would like to assist, gifts and letters should be sent to:

**Joy in the Harvest
P.O. Box 496
Lansing, IL 60438**

**Lowell & Claudia Wertz
or
P.O. Box 1344
Kigoma, Tanzania**



**Lowell Wertz at the refugee camp.
(photo by Johnson Kiishweko)**