

plane would be leaving with President Habyarimana. Neither the Protocol nor the Tanzania Security had advance warning of the new travel arrangement of the President of Burundi. Thus quick re-arrangement of departure was made and President Ntayamira left thereafter for the airport.

He was followed by Vice-President George Saitoti.

**The death of Presidents Habyarimana and Ntayamira
in a Plane Crash**

I did not go to the airport to see off the Presidents since this was not an OAU meeting as such. I said my goodbye to all of them at the VIP lounge of the Kilimanjaro Hotel. Little did I know that I was saying my last farewell to Presidents Habyarimana and Ntayamira. Indeed, the latter President made it a point to say that he was looking forward to seeing me soon in Bujumbura.

I left the Kilimanjaro Hotel and went to join Amne and Ahmed for dinner at the

I got back at my hotel suite at the Kilimanjaro Hotel around 2245 hours. I was so exhausted and by 2330 hrs I was asleep.

In less than three hours - a few minutes after one o'clock in the morning, I was abruptly awakened by a telephone call. It was the Minister of State for Defence, Hon. Abdulrahman Kinana calling. He told me that he had just been informed that the plane carrying President Habyarimana and President Ntayamira had crashed at Kigali and both Presidents were feared dead.

I was shocked, dumbfounded and absolutely shattered by the news. For a minute or so I was hot. I eventually regained my composure and requested Minister Kinana to find out more information and let me know. A little later I called Foreign Minister Rwegasira who confirmed the news. The plane had been shot at either by canon or rocket. All in the plane - a French Falcon 100 (the same plane which had taken me to Bujumbura on October 28, 1993) had perished.

In addition to Presidents Habyarimana and Ntayamira, two Burundi Ministers as well as the Chief of Staff of the Rwandese Army had died in the crash. This was indeed a tragedy of unprecedented proportions - two Heads of State in one plane crash.

SAS/SG/OAU: DIARY/NOTES
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 06, 1994

Among the Rwandese officials who died in the plane crash were the Chief of the General Staff of the Rwandese Army, Major General Deogratias Nsabimana, the President's Personal Physician, Dr. Emmanuel Akigeneye, the President's ADC, Major Thadee Bagaragaza and an Advisor in the President's Office, Ambassador Juvenal Renzoho.

Among those accompanying President Ntaryamira who died in the crash were the Minister of Communications and Government Spokesman, Cyriakue Simbizi and the Minister of Planning and Construction, Bernard Ciza.

Major General Habyarimana who was 57 years old came to power in 1973 after overthrowing President Gregory Kayibanda.

President Cyprien Ntaryamira became President earlier this year (in February 1994) to succeed President Melchior Ndadaye who was assassinated in the course of an attempted coup in October 1993. President Ntaryamira was only 38 years old.

This is a great tragedy for both Rwanda and Burundi. But for the latter it is a double tragedy. The popularly elected President Ndadaye only served for about 5 months before he was gunned down. And now the new President has only served for less than 3 months!

Besides the obvious tragedy to the two countries and the bereaved families, this disaster is clearly a serious setback to the efforts at restoring peace and reconciliation in the two countries. The Arusha Peace Agreement is now in real difficulties if not in tatters.

I kept thinking of all this after hearing the confirmation of these sad news. At about 0200 hours (then Sunday 07 April) I telephoned the Foreign Minister of Rwanda who did not travel in the President's plane and who together with the Minister of Home Affairs were staying at the same hotel with me - indeed on the same floor. (N.B.) I had been accommodated in an executive suite on the Fifth floor. But as soon as the Presidents left, I was moved to a Presidential suite - Rm 530. The very suite that I had earlier in the day and afterwards been occupied by President Habyarimana.

The Foreign Minister was not in his room. I learnt that day that both he and the Minister of Home Affairs were in the Ambassador's residence at that time.

I tried to get Mbita, Bandora, Felli and Mutsau but I did not succeed. At about 0230 hours, I managed to get Akpan at the Embassy Hotel and told him to inform the other members of the OAU

SAS/SG/OAU: DIARY/NOTES
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 06, 1994

team that we should meet later in the morning at the OAU Liberation Committee Offices.

I struggled to sleep and it was only around 0500 hours that I managed to get some sleep. I slept for less than three hours.

This was indeed a heartbreaking and shattering experience. God knows what will become of the Peace process in Rwanda. And what will become of the already messy situation in Burundi.