

# From the G.C. President

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**1. Tragedy strikes Zaire:** Tribal warfare between the Hutus and the Tutsis of Rwanda and Burundi has caused more than one million (largely Tutsi) refugees to flee into the northeastern area of neighboring Zaire. Among these refugees were an estimated 1,000 Seventh-day Adventists. However, the refugee influx increased tribal tensions in Zaire, reports Elder J Nortey (AID president), and led to the slaughter last week of about 1,000 people, including 450 Seventh-day Adventists. Apparently churches were held responsible by the Zairian population for contributing to the crisis by harboring refugees. As a result, many were burned, including 45 Adventist churches.

**2. The Indian Ocean Union,** which includes Madagascar (with three missions), Mauritius (a conference), Reunion (a conference), and the Seychelles Islands (a mission), is one of the seven unions in the Africa-Indian Ocean Division. Due to the current political transition, and on the recommendation of local leaders, I postponed my visit to Madagascar until January of 1994. The following is a brief glance at the three island groups I did visit.

! **Seychelles:** After a three-hour flight from Nairobi, I landed Sunday afternoon in these picturesque islands, one third of the way from the African continent to India. These 100-200 beautiful islands, home to a largely Christian population of 70,000, are unusual because they are of a granitic or coral formation and not volcanic. They stretch about 2,000 km (1,200 miles) from just above Madagascar northward to a point just six degrees below the equator, which bathes them in a warm tropical climate. The Adventist message entered the Seychelles 63 years ago. Today church membership is about 280, but attendance at our four churches for Sabbath services is about 500. During my brief visit I had the opportunity to visit with Mr. France Albert René, President of the Seychelles, as well as Anglican Archbishop Mr. French Chang Hin, with whom the Adventists are cooperating in the translation and production of a Creole translation of the Bible. After all too brief a visit, a two-hour flight in an Air France 747 brought us to our next stop.

! **Reunion:** This almost circular island, a province

of France, located about 800 km (500 miles) east of Madagascar, is dramatically different. Of volcanic origin, with its highest peak over 3,000 meters (10,000+ feet), it features dramatic cliffs and spectacular mountain scenery. The Advent message entered Reunion by a colporteur, who came from Mauritius in 1936. Today our 1,200+ members (out of a population of 600,000) meet in 17 churches that are cared for by six pastors (including the president, who pastors two churches). During our three-day stay, I was able to speak to our believers and meet with our pastors. Since France operates a six-day school week, Adventist university students face difficulties when examinations fall on Sabbath. We presented an appeal to the university president and Mr. Hubert Fournier, Prefect of France, that Adventist university students be provided opportunity to take examinations outside Sabbath hours. Thursday we boarded an Air Mauritius prop-jet for the brief flight to our next stop.

! **Mauritius:** Another beautiful island nation—actually seven islands—of which the westernmost is about 300 km (180 miles) northeast of Reunion, and Rodrigues, the easternmost, lies 560 km (350 miles) to the east. Acquiring independence from Great Britain in 1968, Mauritius became a republic in March of 1992. With a population of 1.2 million (52% Hindu, 22% Muslim, 17% Roman Catholic), it is the most populous of the island groups we visited. In 1914 a lady from Mauritius traveled to Switzerland to care for her health, and there she learned the three angels messages. Upon returning, she shared the news with her sisters. Today our membership of 2,915 meets in 25 churches cared for by 11 pastors. During my visit I was able to share information about the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the President of Mauritius, Mr. Cassam Uteem, a Muslim, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Anerood Jugnauth, a Hindu.

Today we leave this Division after a pleasant visit. On the way home, during a stop-over in Nairobi, we have a meeting with the workers of that area, before continuing our journey just before midnight.