

From the G.C. President

January 23, 1995

Robert S Folkenberg

1. DATELINE UGANDA: After two consecutive all night flights, we arrived in Entebbe, Uganda, shortly after 7 a.m. last Friday morning and were welcomed by church leadership and a beautiful choir. We then drove into the capital, Kampala. This Eastern African nation of 18 million people, called by Sir Winston Churchill “The Pearl of Africa,” nestles against the shores of beautiful Lake Victoria.

Memories are still fresh with the terror and pain inflicted on the populace by dictator/president, Idi Amin Dada, who shed the blood of an estimated 1million citizens. Many Adventists suffered at his hands as well, for our church was banned for several years and our believers worshipped clandestinely. However, since peace returned to Uganda, church growth has been explosive. Fitz Henry, a Jamaican layman, concluded a six-week evangelistic series last October during which more than 3,000 precious souls were baptized. In fact, membership has doubled since 1990 to over 91,000 and workers have accepted the challenge of reaching 200,000 members by the year 2000.

Friday’s 12-hour activities included a workers’ meeting, visits to the union office and government officials, as well as a visit to Bugema College, located about 30 miles from Kampala. This institution, founded in 1948, is built on a fertile 640-acre farm, much of which is still productive, and has more than 150 college, 800 secondary, and 300 primary level students.

Last Sabbath more than 5,000 people, most of them members of 50 Adventist churches in Kampala, worshipped together on the grounds of the Kampala evangelistic center.

Sunday, we continued our journey to Tanzania and Malawi which I’ll report on in the next edition.

2. JAPAN EARTHQUAKE: About 70 people, whose homes were destroyed by the earthquake that struck Japan, January 17, have found shelter at the Nishinomiya Church, according to Kenyu Kinjo, Japan Union Conference secretary. The home of at least one member was totally destroyed and several churches have reported damage though some survived without damage. The full effect of the earthquake on our members is still unknown due to communication difficulties.

According to H. Machida, assistant treasurer of the East Japan Conference, Kobe Adventist Hospital is seriously damaged with many large cracks and most of the glass broken. Both the gas and water services have been turned off. One part of the land has risen and a part of the building has sunk. In spite of the very cold winter weather and the lack of heat, all the staff are working day and night trying to clean up the hospital but recurring tremors continue to damage the building. The

hospital is asking patients, if at all possible, to return to their homes.

3. CECHNYA UPDATE: We received word (January 17) that the 40 Adventists remaining in Grozny are alive, though many members lost their houses and property in the fighting. Many members and non-members have been living in our church in Grozny during the fighting. Miraculously, the only damage to our church building is some broken windows. Before the war, we had about 130 members, but many sought refuge before the war broke out in Stavropol or Mineralne Vodye. The church pastor was living in the area where some of the worst fighting took place, but he would not leave the city as long as any members remained there. We praise the Lord for His mighty protection so that not one Adventist member was lost during this difficulty so far. Our members even had worship service on Sabbath! The Lord is our great Protector and Redeemer.

4. CONFERENCE ON WOMEN’S ISSUES: An educational conference for church leaders, organized by Rose Otis and her team at the GC Office of Women’s Ministries, inaugurated 1995 as the “Year of the Adventist Woman.” GC directors and administrators spent two days earlier this month learning about six critical issues facing women around the world—illiteracy, poverty, risks to health, abuse, excessive workloads, and the need for training and mentoring for women to be more involved in the mission of the Church. Meetings were two dimensional with a formal presentation of topics followed by group discussions. As part of the conference, the Church presented a statement to the United Nations speaking against sexism and appealing for them to uphold women’s rights.

Recommendations from the conference included: that women be involved in the selection process for choosing church leaders, that a database of potential women candidates be established, and that the Church have a policy of responsible openness about issues involving abuse. During the conference, it was stressed that the Year of the Adventist Women must become a fulcrum of sensitivity—a point that we will look back upon in the future and measure a new direction in the Church: a focus of caring, compassion, and assurance that all are equal in God’s sight. Women’s Ministries, organized in 1990, has expanded throughout the world. In the words of Rose Otis, “our intention was to explore ways that we as church leaders can better utilize the vast reservoir of untapped ministry by women.”