

# ST HELENA NEWS

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## Acting Governor acts with sympathy in stowaway case

ALAIN Hakizimana is 16 years of age. He is of the Hutu tribe and comes from a village near Bujumbura in the Central African Republic of Burundi. On the night of Tuesday 7 March he climbed up the stern mooring line of the RMS St Helena whilst she was docked at Cape Town. By hiding in the top compartment of the funnel he evaded the normal stowaway search conducted prior to sailing. Living on a diet of apples, which he took from the fruit berth at Cape Town he avoided detection until 4.30pm on Saturday 11 March. He was taken into the care of the ship's surgeon, Richard Jolly and his dreadful tale began to emerge.

Two months before he had he had fled war torn Burundi after his parents, grandparents and 12 brothers and sisters were murdered by Tutsi soldiers who were searching for Hutu. Travelling by boat and truck he took his flight through Zambia and Mozambique to South Africa and finally to Cape Town. He spent four days living on the streets and took the desperate decision to stowaway on the ship.

Alain shows signs of polio in his left leg and bears scars of knife wounds he says were inflicted by 'military' men. Captain Smith, Master of the RMS ensured that Alain

who was both frightened and confused was treated with empathy and humanity. Passengers rallied round and a collection was made amounting to over £200. It was suggested to Alain that he apply for political asylum in St Helena, which he did. The Governor and the Attorney General were informed and the authorities quickly sought advice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office Immigration Directorate as to whether Alain's case met the criteria of the 1951 Convention on Human Rights. In the meantime the Police Department, with Captain Smith acting as his guardian conducted extensive interviews with Alain, who were gathering information on the case to be assessed under the terms of the Convention. Alain was in a state of near total confusion, was unclear as to his position, and what St Helena might hold for him. Alain, whose first language is French had difficulty in communicating and Michel Martineau acted as one of his interpreters.

The authorities did everything possible to get as much information as possible about Alain's case so that a fair decision could be made as to his request for asylum. On Thursday in the interests of fairness and on humanitarian grounds HE the Acting Governor, Mr Clancy took the decision to allow Alain, who up to that point had been kept on the RMS, ashore so that he could be interviewed more comfortably at the Family Care Centre at Longwood. Alain had a private 1½ hour consultation with the Public Solicitor, Mr Jonathan Hardiker and Michel Martineau as a result of which he finally decided to withdraw his application and expressed the wish to be returned to his country or somewhere where there were Burundi Hutus. The story of Alain Hakizimana is not a new one in other parts of the world but it is a sad reflection on the world in this new millennium that we on this tiny island have become part of his fate.



Burundi in Central Africa

## A Message for Commonwealth Day 2000 From Her Majesty the Queen Head of Commonwealth

It is highly appropriate that the theme of Commonwealth Day at the start of the new millennium should be The Communications Challenge. For much of the millennium just ended, the challenge was to relay information as speedily and accurate as possible. What once took weeks is now instantaneous. But the advance of technology brings a new challenge, of how to use rapid communication responsibly and for the common good. We have to strive to ensure that the advantages of modern communication systems are available to all, and are used to bring us all closer together, not to create fresh divisions. And we need to remember that exciting though the new ways of communicating undoubtedly are, what matters most is what we say to each other. The commonwealth is an organisation so diverse and widespread that it has always depended on good communications, which are helped, of course, by having a common language. Reason advances in communication technology are particularly helpful in fostering the non-governmental networks, which help to make the commonwealth so unique. The exchange of

information and sharing of experiences between representatives of civil society in the different countries form an important part of the Commonwealth's activities at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Both in these networks, and in our co-operation at government level, our shared values and traditions provide a foundation for using the new technology to our common advantage. The challenge for the century just started will be to find ways to use ever-faster communications to bring greater harmony and understanding both within each of society and between them and therefore to strengthen the Commonwealth.

Elizabeth R

## Commonwealth Day Service 13 March 2000.

This year's Commonwealth Day Service was on the theme of Communications and was attended by her Majesty the Queen and the Prince of Wales. As always there were many young people in the Abbey representing schools and organisations in the UK and overseas. In order that as many of these young people see the procession of the Queen and all the dignitaries, the procession enters along the south aisle at the beginning of the service and leaves by the north aisle. The UK Overseas Territories representatives were

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