

## An Unexpected Raid.

**This account was submitted by Srs Eileen Maher and Anatolia Kabereeberaho.**

The following took place in 1978 in Nyamitanga, Mbarara, Uganda during the years that Idi Amin was President.

On 6<sup>th</sup> March after morning prayer in Emmaus Community, we set out for Mass in Nyamitanga Cathedral. First to go out the front door were Srs Anatolia Kabereeberaho and Eileen Maher about 6.50 am. As soon as we were a few steps outside the front door we were startled by shouts of 'Go back! Go back!' Only then did we notice the soldiers in uniform between our house and the road and army buses on the road side. We retreated



and told those following us not to go out. Sr. Josephine Beebwa phoned the Bishop's house to report. Fr Hilary Tibanyenda answered the phone and simply said: 'They are also here' and put down the phone. We were all a bit scared and wondered what we should do or not do knowing the reputation of the soldiers. Our first concern was for our boarders (approx. 500).

Eileen volunteered to go to the dormitories and tell the girls to remain inside. Sr. Donatilla Nyirarwanga answered wisely; 'You with your white legs will be too easily seen going across the compound to the dorms', so Josephine, who was Headmistress of Maryhill High School went instead. She warned the girls not to open the doors for anybody.

The doorbell rang and two soldiers entered our Convent. All they would say was that they wanted to search our house but would not tell us for what. We were all trembling a bit inside, Sr. Elizabeth (Liz) McCarthy offered to take them to the Chapel which they declined. When they reached the showers by the exit door to Maryhill School, they found one locked. They demanded that it be opened but in our panic none of us could find the key. Liz offered to make a cup of tea for them. They were not interested. Fortunately the soldiers went down the corridor to search our bedrooms and forgot about the missing key of the shower. When they entered Sr. Katie (Matthias) O'Farrell's bedroom, she was there and they told her to take down her suitcase from over the wardrobe. She answered: 'me, omukaikuru (old lady), get it down yourself.' He did so and found it almost empty. After checking in suitcases and cupboards of about 4 bedrooms, they got tired and gave up.

Josephine had returned from the dormitories. They asked her to see the school, saying to her: 'aren't you afraid of us?' . Although trembling inside she replied, 'No. I am not if you are working for peace.' When they reached the dorms the girls refused to open, as they could see the soldiers through the open brickwork. Josephine had to plead with the girls and finally they opened. The soldiers searched a few boxes (metal suitcases), moved to the second dorm and did the same. Then they gave up their search and left the school.

The story we heard afterwards:

A few days before the above incident, a lorry carrying food and a big wooden crate passed Makenke Barracks, Mbarara. It was seen by the soldiers and traced to Nyamitanga. Presuming it was carrying ammunition, they sent for reinforcements to Kampala, hence the two buses. The crate which reached Nyamitanga was dismantled as it contained laboratory equipment eg microscopes, for Ibanda Hospital and some clinics. This equipment was taken by small pick-ups to where it was destined for. The crate itself was probably used for firewood. Hence the soldiers found nothing.

Anatolia and Eileen.