

Script Radio Okapi (fragments)

TC 00.00.00 – 00.20.29

In the heart of Africa, Lake Kivu marks the border between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. Due to its mountainous landscape and agriculture resources, the region is called the ‘Switzerland of Africa’. One must admit that this former Belgian colony is rich in natural resources not only in the Kivu region, but also all around the country. Gold, uranium, diamonds, the second biggest forest in the world – the Congo ought to be one of the richest countries on the continent. But all the treasures only incited lust. Five years of civil war (from 1998 to 2003) caused 3 million killed and millions of deported people. Nowadays, the Congo is ruined. There are no roads, no hospitals, there is no administration. Electricity and running water are luxurious and rare. The population fears resumption of combat. It is in Bukavu, on the lake Kivu’s banks, that Radio Okapi’s story starts. This radio station was created by a Swiss organisation, *Fondation Hirondelle* and financed by the European Community. It supplies Congolese people with substantial element in warzone: trustful, objective and free of any prejudice information. In 2000, the UN intervened to put an end to fighting. Tens of thousands of Blue Berets try to ensure the security of the population. This is the biggest mission in the UN’s history. *Fondation Hirondelle* and the UN share the responsibilities of managing Radio Okapi, the radio of peace. The *Fondation* does journalist work and the United Nations ensure logistics and reporters’ security.

TC 00.02.54 ITV WILLIAM LACY SWING (THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL’S SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE IN THE CONGO)

Information in this country, which has almost no infrastructure, plays a key role. This country is as big as Europe was before the expansion, but in the Congo there are no roads and no means of communication between one end and another. Radio Okapi fills the ‘hole’ as it’s the only radio that broadcasts countrywide.

TC 00.03.30 VOICE OFF

The partnership between the United Nations and *Fondation Hirondelle* gave birth to a suprisingly modern radio station in a country where everything is scarce. Hundreds of journalists spread in ten local centers, work for Radio Okapi which broadcasts in five different languages: four local languages and in French.

TC 00.03.51 ITV BREUIL MUGANGA (RADIO OKAPI’S REPORTER)

Briefing starts at 8.30am. We propose the topics, we discuss with our news anchor how to approach a particular subject, what topics to propose to Kinshasa, if it’s really of a nationwide importance and so on. After that, we go into field.

TC 00.04.09 SOUND ‘IN’ NICOLAS SUR (NEWS ANCHOR) / BREUIL

Nicolas: *Uvira, Ruzizi’s plain. Four thousand huts destroyed by heavy rains during last weeks. Have you got any information?*

Breuil: *Yes, I phoned the mayor of the city of Sange who confirmed that victims are still there, so we will have a chance to meet them.*

Nicolas: *This will be an opportunity to see how they are doing, what is their situation. Call me at 3.30pm for an update on the situation.*

Breuil: *4.30pm is more convenient.... Ok, at 3.00pm for the update and at 4.30pm for the recording.*

TC 00.04.56 ITV BREUIL MUGANGA

Here, in the south of Kivu, the roads are in a very bad shape. What is more, you have to make long distances as the villages are sometimes far away from Bukavu. What is more, these zones are getting more and more insecure. When you go into field, you don't know what to expect, and what will happen on the way. Considering everything that takes place here, women being raped, we go there but it's dangerous.

TC 00.06.15 SOUND 'IN' BREUIL MUGANGA / VICTIMS AND WITNESSES OF THE CATASTROPHE

A woman: *When it started to rain, we left right away.*

Breuil: *So you knew it was going to be dangerous?*

The woman: *The rain was really heavy.*

Breuil: *Did you manage to save the furniture?*

The woman: *It was 1.00 o'clock in the morning, there were no means to save anything.*

The CARITAS representative: *In 1950s, there were practically no houses here. People knew it was a place designed for constructions.*

Breuil: *Is there a risk of illness?*

The CARITAS representative: *Yes, we risk an epidemic if we don't take enough care.*

Breuil: *Nevertheless, nothing has been done until now here.*

The CARITAS representative (embarrassed): *I don't know... We, our medical service takes care of the Accident & Emergency only. The region has already suffered a lot. The people here already experienced two wars. I can hardly imagine how they will rebuild their houses.*

TC 00.07.45 ITV BREUIL MUGANGA

It often happens that we have to deal with dramatic situations. Situations that I could call 'cheerful' are rare. In the larger perspective, it becomes stressful, it's exhausting having to talk only about stories that are not funny at all. You always see people's misfortune, and you always report misfortune. For me, it's very important as I tell myself that this is a means of getting help from NGOs for these suffering families. If everyone knows what's happening here, humanitarian actions will get organized faster.

There are those who are here to distribute food and there are those who are to tell what's going on. For me, both are equally important.

TC 00.09.15 ITV SINDANO EKANGA ABDON (CARITAS REPRESENTATIVE)

In my opinion, Okapi radio is really independent. It broadcasts true information. There is no censorship. For example, we're used to filtered information as if somebody was trying to hide something from us. But thanks to Radio Okapi, we all know the details, e.g. what happened in a faraway village. It's very important to know what's going on far from here. It's very important. We didn't have this before.

TC 00.11.30 ITV JUVENAL MUGANGA (BREUIL'S FATHER)

I'm very proud, because before no one knew my name. Today, when people see me, they say: 'Look, This is Breuil's father', and I'm really proud of it.

TC 00.11.50 ITV BREUIL MUGANGA

I know my father would like me to marry. Sometimes, he even tells me not to behave like a man. He says: 'Don't forget you're a woman', even though being a journalist is a masculine job. Here, a lot of people think journalist is a job for men only.

TC 00.12.10 ITV FALLON MUGANGA (BREUIL'S SISTER)

I feel proud, very proud, because the majority of other information radio stations hide most of the truth, because they're afraid or because... I don't know what makes them do that. But she, she says everything. She's really committed.

TC 00.13.05 SOUND 'IN' JUVENAL MUGANGA

I criticise her sometimes, when I'm afraid. (He addresses Breuil): 'When you said to one general that he was with the insurgents...'

TC 00.13.35 BREUIL MUGANGA

There are military men who appreciate our work. There are military men who don't. There are some who consider that for national security we shouldn't poke our nose in their business.

TC 00.13.51 VOICE OFF

Military men's attitude is a sensitive topic in DRC. The country tries to rebuild after civil war and the army is being gradually reconstituted, uniting men who fought against each other a little time ago.

In front of the camera, the military men walk proudly but it's difficult for them to pretend for a longer time. (Two soldiers start to fight)

TC 00.14.39 ITV GENERAL BUDJA MABE (10th MILITARY REGION)

I believe I need information from Radio Okapi and if the radio gives me the information, I must listen to it and correct my mistakes.

Question: *But there is no tension as they're used to being criticising...*

Sometimes, we have to... raise the voice a little...

TC 00.15.01 ITV BREUIL MUGANGA

Especially if we denounce them harassing the population. In the villages, for example, there are a lot of taxes.... There are barricades... The taxes, of course, are not recognised by the State, they are out of control... and on every barricade, you have to pay one hundred francs, two hundred francs... there are also violations of Human Rights such as rapes.

TC 00.15.36 ITV GENERAL BUDJA MABE (10th MILITARY REGION)

A military man can only be called so, because he has an air of a military. But he isn't really acquainted with the military regulations. He doesn't know the law of the State.

For example, we have children armies, because there are still children soldiers in our troops... We try to pull them out of there.

TC 00.16.00 VOICE OFF

Violence, war and death... The region of African Great Lakes has known it all, especially during the terrible genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Already back then, one radio station played a major role in the conflict, alas, encouraging the massacres – the Thousand Hills Radio.

TC 00.16.20 The caption: 'Rwanda, Spring of 1994'

THOUSAND HILLS RADIO (FRAGMENTS)

The hill of Rebero has been liberated. No more “ignasi” (roaches) are to be seen. There are still a few fringe areas, that need to be cleansed with the help of the local population.

TC 00.16.46 VOICE OFF

In the evening of 6 April 1994, it is this radio that broadcasts the signal to start the last genocide of the 20th Century. The password is “It’s time to cut down the tall trees”. The Hutu propaganda has been calling for weeks to hate and kill the members of the other ethnic group in Rwanda, the Tutsies.

TC 00.17.12 THOUSAND HILLS RADIO (SONG/FRAGMENT)

*Where are the rebels that called me?
They are no more. They’ve been exterminated.
Sing and rejoice, for the rebels are no more!*

TC 00.17.23 ITV ROBERT MENARD (FIRST SECRETARY OF THE REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS)

The Radio of Thousand Hills leads the murderers. It is the radio they listened to waiting at the barricades, machettes in their hands, learning what to do next. It was as simple as that.

TC 00.17.36 THOUSAND HILLS RADIO (FRAGMENTS)

Keep listening to the station and let no “roach” pass! I already told you that hemp brings courage. Smoke hemp and kill the roaches that try to sneak through!

TC 00.17.52 ITV ROBERT MENARD

The radio was explicitly telling the people to kill others. “You went that far. You killed everybody. But you forgot about the children. Go back there”! Can you imagine that?

TC 00.18.03 THOUSAND HILLS RADIO (FRAGMENTS)

The RPF roaches and their complices will all be exterminated. Soon, there will be none of them in the country. They will gradually fall to our bullets. We shall kill them like rats.

TC 00.18.18 ITV ROBERT MENARD

“Roaches”, “vermin”, “subhumans”. They started by portraying people as animals, so it would be easier to kill them.

TC 00.18.28 VOICE OFF

In three months, 800’000 Tutsis and several hundreds of moderate Hutus are killed. Till the last days of the Rwandan Massacre, the Thousand Hills Radio encourages massacres presenting them as something natural and calming the killers’ conscience. For the first time, a radio station takes an active part in tumbling a country into hell.

To counter the Thousand Hills Radio’s programmes, Swiss journalists decide to create an alternative radio station, a radio of peace, capable of providing credible information, not influenced by any of the parties. A radio radically diverging from official state media, controlled by the authorities, or from the opposition propaganda.

TC 00.19.28 ITV JEAN-MARIE ETTER (CHAIRMAN OF FONDATION HIRONDELLE)

It was a friend of mine, Philipe Daïnden, who worked for a Swiss television, the Romande, and who went to do the coverage on the events in Rwanda. We didn’t talk about genocide back then. But then, he returned and told us that it was all about genocide. He was shaken by what he saw there, by the scale of what was happening. He told us: “We should do something. We cannot go to one

corner of the Earth and then return saying that something terrible has happened, and not doing anything about it. We should do something". We asked ourselves whatever we could do to help, and we thought: "A radio. We can create a radio".

The first thing that the civilian victims of a conflict lose, is their dignity. It is so, because you ignore them, you treat them like things. You can chase them away, you can kill them, you can martyrise them and deprive them of their belongings, their means of survival, their families. You can take everything away from them, but it all comes down to dignity. A good radio programme, that is a radio that talks about them, which enables them to be heard, it is a radio that returns them their dignity.