

Report of Drocellas' trip to Germany in 2025

This invitation was in keeping with the tradition of many trips to Germany by Rwandan guests, which we have organized together since 1999. They always had a threefold purpose:

- The survivors of the genocide against the Tutsi were to remind the German public of the largely forgotten genocide and the responsibility of the international community,
- Above all, however, to report on their experiences of God during this time, on the healing of trauma and the miracle of forgiveness and reconciliation, and
- To report on the many life-changing and sustainable projects of our partners in Rwanda that we support - hoping to gain new friends and supporters for this wonderful work.

To mark the 10th anniversary of our association, *Iriba Shalom International e.V.*, we wanted to invite Drocella Nduwimana, the director of *one* of our two partner organizations, ***Shalom Ministries Rwanda***. In June 2019, Pastor Charles Karekezi, the director of our *other* partner, *Iriba Shalom Rwanda* in the southwest, visited us for a few days.

Drocella's trip was delayed considerably and encountered significant difficulties. Due to the diplomatic crisis with Belgium, she had to fly to the Belgian embassy in Nairobi to obtain her Schengen visa. She then had to wait a long time for it to be sent, which meant that her departure was later than planned.

She spent the first week traveling with Monika, the vice president of our association, in Southern Germany, attending lectures, church services, and meetings. We were responsible for the northern area and will therefore only report on that.

Denise welcomed Drocella in our parking lot with flowers (pictured right with Monika), praised God with a Rwandan song and dance, and said to Drocella, 'Here is our airport'. Our member Dr. Rosemarie Weise also welcomed Drocella with flowers.



Denise and Drocella celebrated 25 years of 'silver friendship' at the same time. They met for the first time in February 2000 at a seminar on trauma counseling in Kigali. Both were still traumatized. In July of the same year, Drocella and Maman Lambert traveled with Denise to a conference in Kenya organized by the Anglican Church. They recalled meeting Christel Heiner and Pastor Schuhmacher from MFB there. After the conference, they began meeting at night to pray and work through their trauma.

Drocella came to stay with us at the beginning of October. On the fourth, we took the train to Potsdam via Berlin.

On the train journey, we experienced a surprising coincidence: Denise's books were laid out on our reserved table. A young woman on the other side looked over with interest and asked if she could see the book. She wanted to buy the book right away, told us that she was a photographer, and had already read about Rwanda. We are curious to see if anything more will come of this contact.



And Drocella told us on the train how the civil war began 35 years ago at the beginning of October and how she lived in daily fear of being killed because all Tutsis in the country were considered accomplices of the RPF liberation army, even though they were all apolitical and had nothing to do with the RPF. In her fear, she went with others (we knew very well) to a congregation of the Pentecostal church ADEPR (the largest Protestant church community in Rwanda), where they heard the gospel for the first time, and soon after, she accepted Jesus as her personal savior. Since then, she has had no more fear, even though the killings continued.

With the German railway running over an hour late, we arrived in **Potsdam** and were driven to the *Lepsiushaus* by the pastor of the Nehemia Church.

I considered it to be important that the survivors of the *last* mega-genocide in history also see memorials to the other two internationally recognized genocides of the 20th century, which claimed more than a million victims. That is why we later visited the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin and, at the beginning of our trip, the Lepsiushaus in Potsdam. Have a look at www.lepsiushaus.de/en. It commemorates the cruel **genocide of 1.5 million Armenians in 1915-16** by the then Young Turk regime in the final phase of the Ottoman Empire, which dreamed of a homogeneous Turkish-Islamic state. To this day, the Turkish government denies this genocide and even punishes anyone in Turkey who talks about it. This is an expression of a completely misguided understanding of “national honour” and shame: in reality, it is a shame to deny one's own dark past and very honourable to acknowledge it, such as when we do with our dark Nazi past or the Americans with the former terrible praxis of slavery in the United States.



The museum is named after the courageous Protestant pastor Dr. **Johannes Lepsius**, who came from Potsdam. He tirelessly attempted, against the ban of the German Imperial Government, which was allied with the Ottoman Empire during World War I, to alert the German public to the massacres of at least 100,000 Armenians in 1895/96 and then to their extermination during the war. He had previously tried to dissuade the Turkish leaders from their plans, which of course did not succeed – but his story is included in Franz Werfel's great novel ‘*The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*’ (*The New York Times* said about it “Once read, it will never be forgotten”).

An Armenian researcher gave us an expert tour of this house, which is well worth a visit for anyone visiting Potsdam and Berlin! We saw so many **parallels in the preparations and course of the genocide** against

the Tutsi in RWANDA:

etween the intent to destroy, the atrocities, and the deception of the public... But we were also amazed at the **parallels in the aid provided to the victims and survivors** among the Armenians and the Rwandan Tutsi. The helpers and ‘heroes’, or rather ‘**angels in the courtyard of hell**’ for the Armenian victims (see picture below), for example in the *Christian Relief Association in the Orient* – such as Beatrice Rohner and Ernst Lohmann – were almost all confessing Christians, many of them ‘pietistic’, who did not simply follow the mainstream and state propaganda.



In Potsdam, we experienced the hospitality of a kind elderly lady who also touched us with her testimony: she felt that she had no peace when she made decisions without listening to God's Spirit. In addition, she acts according to Jesus' words, *'Do not store up treasures on earth, where they can be stolen...'*, therefore sells many of her earthly treasures, and gives the proceeds to Christian charities. She also wants to regularly support the new Senior's Home in Mukoma.



We had a very blessed service at the *Nehemia Church* in Potsdam, which was so open and grateful. Many were deeply moved and expressed their gratitude for Drocella's testimony and report.

The young, friendly pastor had very willingly invited us to the service after I had received rejections from many Berlin churches. In retrospect, we saw it as God's guidance.

At the end of our stay in Potsdam, we were invited to visit Mary and her family. She is the leader of the RCI (*Rwandan Christian Union*) in the German Rwandan diaspora. She also came to Kassel on June 28 with her team for the 10th anniversary of the association and Denise's (belated) 60th birthday party (see picture on the right).

In **Berlin**, we stayed at the Basisgemeinde Prenzlauer Berg. From there, Drocella was able to see a little of Berlin with us: the New Synagogue Museum, then (unfortunately without me, as I felt dizzy and nauseous and had to visit a doctor's office): the Wall (bottom right), the former border, the Brandenburg Gate, and the



Holocaust Memorial (bottom left). Denise and Drocella also visited the Rwandan Embassy, but the ambassador and the first secretary were unable to attend.

The time in and around Kassel

After returning from Berlin, we had two wonderful events at our FEG (Free Evangelical Church) in Kassel-Wilhelmshöhe. In the afternoon, more people than usual came to the senior citizens' Bible study group, some of them from outside the congregation (below to the left) Many expressed their gratitude and were very moved.



In the evening, there was a public lecture – we were delighted that the house groups from Rosemary's church were there, making up for the somewhat low attendance in the evening. Afterwards, there were good conversations and some goods from Rwanda were sold by our members Yvonne and Jürgen (top right). It was also a great joy that Jiali, a Chinese member of our former international home group (with participants from eight nations), longed to see us again and joined us. She was visiting her friend Qiao, who had read the Bible for the first time in her life in our living room and then decided to follow Jesus at the ProChrist event – soon after, she also joined a group trip to Rwanda.

Since the daily newspaper had given the wrong date for the evening appointment, I asked them to do an interview with Drocella as 'compensation'. My request was granted, and the article summarized her ministry quite well. However, there was no mention of our association, not even the website. Moreover, the content lacked any reference to **the source of change and strength** in Drocella, namely God, His Word, and the prayer groups. All of this transformed a completely desperate woman into a power woman full of hope, who was able to give over 1,000 people new courage, new perspectives on life, and even the seemingly unthinkable reconciliation between perpetrators and victims. The article gives the impression as if she was able to do all this on her own – she constantly conveyed the opposite.

Denise and Drocella visited **Hamburg** to see board member Elisabeth Kürsten (pictured below with her husband at the Port of Hamburg). She was the first volunteer to fly to Rwanda after graduating from high school to serve with *Iriba Shalom International e.V.* She lived with Drocella for four months and introduced the sponsorship program at *Shalom Ministries* as a volunteer. In the last days she got her first child.



The trip to **Schwandorf** in Bavaria was a great blessing, as the two were able to visit the elderly couple, Mr. and Mrs. Horsch, who are now 90 and 91 years old (see above center). Both were in Rwanda in 2016, at the age of over 80! They were a great encouragement to Denise during her trip to Rwanda and afterwards. Brunhilde organized an evening where Drocella shared her testimony and Denise reported on the work of *Iriba Shalom International e.V.* in front of many guests.

The following Sunday, Denise and Drocella drove from Kassel to a FeG church near **Bad Wildungen**, which had expressed interest when I (Wolfgang) mentioned after a service that, after many cancellations, we were still urgently looking for a church where she could speak that Sunday. So Drocella was able to give her testimony there once again and report on the work with pictures (see above right – I was unable to accompany them because I had taken on a preaching service in a church in another location, which had been invited Denise and me to conduct a service there in November).

In Kassel, Drocella saw **Wilhelmshöhe** Palace with its great art gallery, the Hercules statue on the top of the mountain and the water cascades beneath in the Wilhelmshöhe Mountain Parc by night and by day – the whole ensemble has become UNESCO World Cultural Heritage. She was thrilled by the sweeping view of the city in the so-called Kassel basin (pic left). As with other visitors from Rwanda, we wanted to show her **Wartburg Castle** (bottom center) where Martin Luther had translated the New Testament into good German from Greek for the first time. Marion Reichow drove her and Denise there. Drocella was grateful that I had shown her the (newer) movie on Luther beforehand.



At the end of this three-week trip, many friends of our ministry came to see them (Claudia and Andreas had invited them beforehand): friends from Kassel such as Kevin Hüvelmann, who had been to Rwanda and has long supported our work, and Mr. and Mrs. Böker. Michael Böker had been to Rwanda several times to pray for the sick, but they also supported the Rwandans in other ways. Michael Berg, one of three young men who had done eight months of voluntary social service in Rwanda, had traveled specially by train from (approx.. 300 km distant) Leipzig, and finally the Mr and Mrs from Hanover also came. On the last evening, we were invited to Marion's house with some friends (see above right), where we enjoyed a delicious meal, looked back on the trip (especially from Drocella's perspective), prayed together, and blessed her for the journey ahead.

Drocella then took the train to Belgium, where she plans to visit her sister. She intends to return to Bonn at the end of the month and travel with Monika to the North Sea. There she will speak in a church and hopefully also have time to enjoy the view of the sea.

Despite the considerable difficulties for Drocella and despite many complicated plans and cancellations in advance, the trip was ultimately very beneficial—how many people personally experienced more faith and willingness to forgive as a result, we will probably only find out in eternity.

Drocella's trip was already planned in 2020 but was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was worth it that Denise had a strong desire to found this association 10 years ago. We are grateful to all the co-founders, members, the board team, friends, and donors worldwide who have faithfully remained with us on this journey. We pray and hope that you will all continue to support this wonderful ministry. We are always happy to welcome new people who support this work, bless it in prayer, and visit Rwanda to see for themselves. We are attaching **Drocella's testimony** again, also for sharing and with an account for donations for important projects.

God bless you,

Wolfgang and Denise