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COMMUNICATION FROM THE VICE-CHAIRMEN AND THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE  
"UNION NATIONALE RUANDAISE (UNAR)" IN TANGANYIKA CONCERNING  
RUANDA-URUNDI

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UNION NATIONALE RUANDAISE  
(UNAR) P.O. Box 9151  
Dar-es-Salaam  
Tanganyika

SUBJECT: National reconciliation

To the Minister for African Affairs  
Brussels

Dar-es-Salaam, 12 August 1960

Copies for information to:

The Belgian Parliament, Brussels

The Secretary-General of the  
United Nations, New York.

Sir,

In the spirit of collaboration to which our party has consistently adhered and which, despite the persecution to which it has been subjected by the Belgian Administration of Ruanda-Urundi, has always inspired its political action, we have the honour to set out below our views and observations on the political situation in the Trust Territory, a situation which is particularly confused and critical in Ruanda.

Without dwelling fruitlessly on the past, which is dominated by the disturbances of last November of which Ruanda still retains bloody traces, we would simply recall that the Belgian Administration has since decreed a state of emergency which is still in force. Thanks to this military régime, the Administration has completely changed the political Map of Ruanda by dismissing all the indigenous authorities, replacing them by other interim authorities and by instituting widespread prosecutions, in which judgements not subject to appeal were given by military courts. As you are aware, these military courts took action only against members or sympathizers of the UNAR, whereas

to members of the Parmehutu-Aprosoma parties who instigated riots went completely unpunished. Many people were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for having made use of their right of self-defence, while their aggressors were rewarded with important posts in the state Administration. There would be good grounds for saying that these military courts were set up for the sole purpose of suppressing UNAR and removing it from the political chess board of Ruanda. Such unilateral measures, which are a new kind of parody of justice, can certainly not be expected to lead to the restoration of peace or to a lasting national reconciliation. Subsequent events have disproved the case of those who were bold enough to believe that an atmosphere of calm could be restored by a régime of military dictatorship, and the imminence of social and economic disaster is a dire indication of the political chaos in which the country is floundering.

Despite the unjustifiable measures against our party which forced us into exile, we have, while pursuing our aim of immediate independence for our country, retained a strong desire to co-operate in achieving national reconciliation. It is this constant concern for peace which led us to propose a round-table conference which would include all the representatives of the political parties of Ruanda and Burundi and the Trusteeship authorities and which would be attended by United Nations Observers. We also showed our desire to collaborate by endorsing the wise recommendations of the last United Nations Visiting Mission, with which the Belgian Administration also expressed its agreement. Although our party subsequently refused to participate in the talks which you organized at Brussels, that was not due to unjustified opposition, but was because the only body invited to the talks in question was the Special Council; that body was set up by the Belgian Administration and there is no guarantee of its representative character. Moreover, several other parties of Ruanda were systematically excluded from the talks without any valid reason; it should also be noted that the talks, which were organized to deal only with Ruanda, introduced the principle of the separation of the Trust Territory, whereas one of our fundamental aims is to strengthen its unity. Lastly, the talks were held in the absence of United Nations observers, thus depriving it of an important guarantee of success.

Let us now turn to the question of the communal elections which have just been held against a background of disturbances in Ruanda and which are beginning in an

atmosphere of extreme tension in Burundi. According to the aforementioned recommendations of the United Nations Mission, which were worked out in agreement with the leaders of the political parties and the Belgian authorities, the communal elections due to be held in June-July were postponed to a date as soon as possible after the projected round-table conference. These elections therefore represent a flagrant departure from the above-mentioned agreements, a fact which, to say the least, rendered them suspect to us. For that reason, and because an emergency military régime is still in force in Ruanda, because there was no prior amnesty of prisoners and the refugees had not returned to their homes nor had the individuals sentenced to controlled residence returned to political life in the state; in a word, because the ground had not been prepared for these elections by a period of peace and civil liberty so as to give all citizens the same opportunities, UNAR protested against these undemocratic elections and declined to participate in them.

Our apprehensions have just been confirmed; the communal elections in Ruanda were forced through and there were patent irregularities in the way in which they were conducted. It would be tedious to enumerate all the cases in which voters were coerced and votes faked, but there are some obvious facts: the military régime was reinforced by contingents of Belgian troops from the Congo, patrols were organized to force the electors to the polls, barriers were set up to prevent freedom of movement by UNAR members during the election period, and the pass system was made more stringent; there was large-scale maltreatment of individuals, and there were arbitrary arrests which were confined to members of UNAR and parties affiliated to it. Despite these drastic measures, the percentage of abstentions was very high in all districts, contrary to the official reports which frequently ignored them so as to ensure the victory of the Parmehutu-Aprosoma, parties which are entirely devoted to government policy. In some communes, Parmehutu members from districts where the party had more groups of supporters were brought in by truck to make up for the abstentions by their votes. The procedure, though lacking in honesty, is nevertheless ingenious. In the commune of Kigali (an urban centre) where Europeans and Asians gained some seats, the Administration, seeing that voters were generally failing to turn out, resorted to an infallible method and made use of a white Missionary, who brought some new converts and some members of his congregation,

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who did not live in Kigali, to vote; but these elections were pre-arranged, for these so-called voters received voting papers which had been duly completed in advance. This under-hand manoeuvre aroused the strong indignation of some Belgians and Ruandese who made protests which were, of course, rapidly suppressed as a result of the Administration's intervention. If you add the further fact that the majority of the voters are illiterate and that school-children were assigned to them who had been briefed to mark particular names on the voting papers, you will have a picture of the communal elections in Ruanda which, in view of the facts stated above and of the preparatory propaganda by the Special Resident in favour of the Parmehutu-Aprosoma parties, were bound to ensure the so-called victory of those two parties.

It is not surprising that UNAR did not take part in such elections, that it is contesting their validity and is protesting vigorously against the anti-democratic procedures which were employed in them.

At present when this election farce has only just ended, the disturbances in the State are continuing, the military forces count dozens of victims in several regions, and those who did not take part in the elections are being harried; they are being forced to have their identity cards stamped "he has voted" in order to increase the percentage of participation. All these measures of coercion are causing anxiety among the population, and the exodus to Uganda is assuming alarming proportions; there are more and more arrests of UNAR members, and large numbers of African officials in the Administration are being placed under controlled residence without further ado, if they are even suspected of being members of UNAR. How could we not be indignant at the case of the recent arrest of our first and only lawyer, Isidore RWUEUSISI, who had just graduated from the University of Brussels and is now interned in the Ruhengeri district? The bankrupt policy which your Administration is at present carrying out in Ruanda is completely frustrating and is leading the country towards an unprecedented disaster.

That Administration has nevertheless received serious warnings from several authoritative sources on the gravity of the situation, in particular, from the General Council of Ruanda-Urundi, which vainly tried to induce its President to give priority to consideration of the political issue, seeing that it affects all the others.

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In conclusion, Sir, we declare ourselves ready, as in the past, to collaborate fully in all honest measures for national reconciliation and for the restoration of peace. We simply ask that the recommendations of the United Nations Trusteeship Council should be scrupulously and rapidly complied with. If there is a general amnesty of prisoners - more particularly, and as a matter of urgency, if an amnesty is granted to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of UNAR and the other party leaders - and if the refugees are allowed to return to their country; if the state of emergency is lifted; if the individuals in controlled residence are released; if civil liberties are restored and guaranteed for all parties without distinction; if a round-table conference is held dealing with Ruanda-Urundi as a whole and with the participation of the United Nations Observers; if the communal elections are re-held in a more tranquil political climate and are followed by legislative elections, and if all these measures take place under United Nations supervision, the country will not be long in recovering an atmosphere of calm and will go forward steadfastly towards an era of peace and progress, which would favour its rapid accession to international sovereignty.

The present critical situation in Ruanda can be resolved if you take urgent action to implement the wise recommendations of the United Nations, and you would at the same time prevent the explosion which threatens Burundi, where a state of emergency has just been decreed and where the elections have begun with arrests.

We have the honour to be, etc.

Vice-Chairmen      For the UNION NATIONALE RUANDAISE,  
Cosma REBERO (Signature illegible)

Michel KAYIHURA (Signature illegible)

General Secretary:      Michel RWAGASANA (Signed) (RWAGASANA)

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