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COMMUNICATION FROM THE ABANYARWANDA NA ABARUNDI ABADAHEMUKA
CONCERNING RUANDA-URUNDI

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ABANYARWANDA NA ABARUNDI
ABADAHEMUKA,
P.O. Box 30527,
KAMPALA,
Uganda.

14th November, 1959

His Excellency Governor Jean Paul Harroy,
Governor's Residence,
USUMBURA,
Runada-Urundi.

Your Excellency,

Enclosed is copy of a telegram we sent to you a few days ago on the Kigali shooting incident on 17th October, 1959 and in it is a compressed summary of our feelings and an indication of our consternation at the brutalities perpetrated on innocent people by your militia at the order of your officials!

We, who by virtue of our absence from our country, are spared from the oppression and arbitrariness of your officials and their hamhanded methods of administration, regard it as our duty to protest in the strongest terms possible at the indignities and injustices that our unfortunate kinsmen in Ruanda are being subjected to. Silence in such cases would be repugnant to morality and/or cowardice of the meanest and basest type. Just in case our brothers in Ruanda are bullied into silence, as is likely to be the case, we wish to put on record our protests and submit our petition to Your Excellency.

Your Excellency is well aware that the immediate reason why the petitioners who were shot at came to Kigali was to ask why their popular Chief Pierre Mungarurire was being transferred suddenly from his county of Bwanacyambwe to a remote county of Migongo. What these peaceful citizens wanted was an explanation and an opportunity to inform you of their disapproval of your decision and their hatred (shared by most Banyarwanda) of Bwanakwei who was being brought to replace Mungarurire. We feel that all Colonial people let alone people in a trust territory have a right to see their governor and petition that justice be done if they have a grievance, which these people had, and Your Excellency will agree that the answer to such a petition is not bullets!! Your Excellency is further aware that these people did not do or even threaten to do any violence. You also are aware that by the order of your officers these peaceful petitioners were drenched with water hoses beaten up and finally shot at instead of having Your Excellency's audience which they had come for. Need we comment on how the civilized world feels at such high handed and brutal action so reminiscent of Nazi Germany.

Your Excellency will recall that only a few days before the incident you had taken a decision which not only the Banyarwanda but all the free world would consider arbitrary, undemocratic and unwise, to say the least, to transfer les Chef M. Kayihura, C. Rwangombwa and P. Mungarurire from their counties to remote areas for no other offence than that they had participated in activities of a new political party, the Abashyirahamwe, UNR and spoken at their meetings. This action you will agree, was in contradiction with your former decision to allow chiefs and civil servants to join political parties and participate in their activities and your permission to these particular three in connection with activities of Abashyirahamwe. It is also surprising that you chose only chiefs who were members of the Abashyirahamwe as victims for your action and did nothing to others who are in our eyes guilty of very grave offences against our nation and who are responsible for misleading your administration. You will also recall that protests against your decision were raised by all the people ruled over by these three chiefs spontaneously namely the inhabitants of Bugoyi, Bwanacyambwe and Rukiga. You will also remember that these three chiefs very rightly tendered their resignation which you did not accept. It was through intimidation of these

peaceful citizens who had come to petition their governor against an apparent injustice to their popular chiefs that the shooting took place. While this method might have been approved of in the Middle ages or earlier, Your Excellency will agree that it is high handed and criminal, to say the least, in the 20th Century! We very much hope that Your Excellency is seeing to it that the officers who were responsible for this brutality are punished particularly as they were perpetrated in your presence at Kigali. We also hope that Your Excellency will drop your original plan of victimizing the three chiefs because not only is it unjust and undemocratic but it is also likely to cause disturbance in the Country as Your Excellency is very well aware.

We feel that the root of the Kigali shooting, the victimization of the three chiefs, the frequent imprisonment of many people and the brutality perpetrated on the prisoners such as making them run for an endless number of hours until they drop unconscious through sheer exhaustion, and many other unthinkable tortures and the present general unrest obtaining in the Country can be put in proper perspective by recapitulating a few of the past events and activities directly or indirectly initiated by your Administration assisted by Bishop Perraudin and some of his priests with some of their parishioners.

1. Your Excellency is aware that just under two years ago one Gitera, a henchman of Bishop Perraudin, with the direct pushing of the bishop and, as every one knows, indirect pushing of your administration, started a party known as the Association pour Promotion de la Masse, notoriously known in the Country as "APROSOMA". The world was told that it was for the promotion of the Bahutu, a very noble motive indeed. But as Your Excellency and the rest of us know only too well, it turned out to be a machinery for production and propagation of the most indecent abuses of Umwami, his royal family and his regalia, Abatware, Abatutsi, all the leading personalities and the progressive element in the Country and the established regime; preaching hatred between different sects of population to the extent of preaching murder and civil war!! Attached are some of his venomous and most seditious literature to illustrate our point. The same Association naturally praised to the skies the Belgian administration and fervently preached the indefinite perpetuation of the same. Your Excellency will agree that it is indeed a most unusual colonial political party that preaches such a creed and has

not even a single word to say about independence! It is very revealing that when your administration was approached by the aggrieved parties in connection with this venomous literature it did absolutely nothing to put the matters right. Indeed more than once your administration said, he was fighting for his rights and they were not going to interfere -- Most democratic! And yet when one of the parties affronted wrote a small pamphlet in reply to some of the Association's abuses and incitement of sectarian hatred, it was pounced upon with amazing alacrity by the same administration and banned immediately! You Yourself used your unique powers and dismissed a chief summarily because it was whispered that he helped to distribute the pamphlet. Your Excellency will agree that this was a departure from the former democratic tolerance professed in connection with "APROSOMA". Is it not also a fact that the reason why you decided to transfer the above mentioned chiefs is that it was alleged that they said things that discredited your administration in their speeches at political meetings? Yet another departure from the professed "democratic tolerance" mentioned above. Yet Gitira's speeches and literature as you can read for yourself used the most abusive language to incite people against Umwami and his administration not in any way comparable with what these three chiefs are alleged to have said. Though Gitira has now resigned as President of "APROSOMA", his successor Gregory Kayibanda has now started acts of violence so long threatened and it is rumoured that again he has been pushed by your administration and that his thugs are given every opportunity to carry on their acts of violence unperturbed. We are surprised, as should be the rest of the world, that your government has not touched him at all in spite of the knowledge that there are masses of literature in which APROSOMA incited people to violence. It is very surprising that in spite of this knowledge and the knowledge that APROSOMA never attracted any substantial following the acts of violence instigated by them as a minor party that has reverted to violence because it has lost its following are now shamelessly being termed a civil war between Bahutu and Batutsi in your official news releases.

We need not make any comments about Movement Social Muhutu because its leader Kayibanda is the "General" responsible for the present "Civil War", which while a great deal is being done to publicise it with the truth grossly distorted, very little is being done to put it to an end.

As for the Bwanakweri, Seruvumba, Ndazaro, Makuza, Karekezi etc., and their party termed "some progressive Watusi". Your Excellency knows only too well that they are generally known to us all as stooges of your administration and their party only a put-up sham to help your administration. You yourself knows how deeply they are hated by all Banyarwanda.

If Your Excellency is kept informed of what happens in the country you should know that Association pour Promotion de la Masse, Movement Social Muhutu and the recently formed (Parti Progressist Catholic?) are all government put up shows led by government stooges and joined by very few people. You should also know that without the government support and boosting they would collapse in no time. Need we stress the evils and short-sightedness of such a policy? We are ready to substantiate what we have said above if and when Your Excellency wishes.

In spite of all efforts made to strangle it in its infancy and the present disturbance specially created to destroy it, the fact remains that the ABASHYIRAHAMWE U.N.R. is still the most popular party - in actual fact the only political party in the real sense of the term in Ruanda. It easily commands the largest majority as the statistics of the people who hold their cards show. The usual record attendance of their meetings which you have now so undemocratically suspended, bear witness to their popularity. Unlike the other parties mentioned above, its following spontaneous. Under the normal circumstances that obtain in all colonies and trust territories where democracy is practised, the government should work with rather than against a party that has an uncoerced, uninduced and unbribed following of the people as the Abashyirahamwe (U.N.R.) has. It surprises us therefore to see your government employing all tricks possible to frustrate the activities of this party and discourage its membership. We quote inter alia the organization of disturbance squads by your District Commissioners, particularly the ones in Ruhengeri, Kibungo and Astrida, stopping people coming to the meetings as the District Commissioner of Kibungo did, false reporting by your Information Service, smear and mud-slinging campaign against the party as is carried on by all your administration in general. Even you yourself joined in this Campaign by victimizing les chefs Kayihura, Rwangombwa and Mungarurire as we have mentioned above. This surprises us in your case because not only have you a reputation as a scholar but also as a liberal administrator! We will not omit to

point out that this false reporting persists in your news releases concerning the present disturbances in Ruanda. While this may fool the world for a whole, it does not fool anyone conversant with the true facts nor will the effect it is designed to create be lasting. We do not expect the party to be popular with your administration because unlike your puppet parties it does not preach indefinite perpetuation of colonial regime (it asks for independence in 1962) but surely it is not asking too much to expect fair play to be exercised and people allowed to follow a political party of their own choice unmolested, intimidated, unvictimized, nor is it expecting too much when we say that the world should be told the truth about conditions obtaining in Rwanda instead of being given your government's "revised version" of them designed to suit its own ends.

Your Excellency is aware that before the coming of either the Belgians or the Germans, Rwanda had an established government headed by Umwami and administered by a heirarchy of chiefs. The details of this sytem of government can be read in Dr. A. Kagame's books as can many of the Kinyarwanda customs, traditions, culture, ethnology, philosophy and history. Father Mulenzi is another author who has written on the pre-European government of Rwanda. The natural thing to expect in a case where a fully evolved system is found in existence by a power in trust would be to improve on rather than undermine that system, indeed your government tells the outside world that it exercises indirect rule in Rwanda. As should be obvious to Your Excellency there is no such a thing as Native Administration in Rwanda, the Belgian Administration has used the Umwami and his chiefs as their agents carefully avoiding centralization at the top. As you very well know the Umwami has no Prime Minister and no Council of Ministers. The present Council Superior du Pay is only five years old! While the Umwami has the nominal power of appointing chiefs he has no power of dismissing them!! There are many anomalies that we would like to point out but space does not allow us to do so. They will be a subject of another memorandum. As if this were not bad enough, your administration adds an insult to an injury by using every trick possible to undermine the dignity power and prestige - indeed the very existence of Umwami's throne!! This has been done in many subtle ways such as not allowing him to fly a flag on his car, having number plates on his car (removed only very recently) treating him without much ceremony in public, in fact using him as only a Senior Chief, and several other subtle ways. Your system of administration of Rwanda has

been so devised that the Chiefs and the people's loyalty has been diverted from where it is naturally due, that is to the Umwami, and directed to the Belgian Administrators! It has been due to sheer strength of custom that the Umwami has not lost the loyalty of his subjects altogether, but even then, people like Bwanakweri, Seruvumba, Ndazaro, Makuza and several others - all well known stooges of your administration have openly come out in rebellion against him doing things that would under normal circumstances amount to treason! As Your Excellency is aware these traitors, as they are regarded, have had and still have your administration's encouragement, blessings and patronage - they are always referred to as progressive "Watusi" - (meaning BATUTSI we presume) and all other flattering names obviously because they are useful tools. This undermining of Umwami's power and prestige and diversion of his subjects' loyalty and allegiance away from him assumed an even greater magnitude when your administration realised that the Umwami had ceased to be its tool and become a benevolent monarch of his people, enlightened, politically awake, and liberal in his outlook and policy. All of a sudden he ceased to be a heavily decorated highly praised monarch that he used to be to your government and became the most bitterly criticised and maligned single individual in Rwanda! It is at this stage also that Batutsi were labelled oppressors of the poor and the division between the Bahutu and Batutsi was emphasised and made to loom large in the eyes of the world. In order to achieve this, Gitera was encouraged by your administration, according to the popular belief current in the country, working through Bishop Feraudin and some of his priests to found Association pour Promotion de la Masse. We are all familiar with Gitera's strong attacks in the bitterest and most abusive language on the Umwami, the royal family, the regalia, chiefs and Batutsi and his constant incitement of the Bahutu to rise and exterminate Batutsi, as we are of your administrations refusal to restrain him from preaching sectarian hatred, open treason and civil war. The conclusion here is self-evident. Gregory Kayibanda and his Movement Social Muhutu, Aloys Munyangaju and his poisonous pen and Bwanakweri and his team of stooges were all used to the same effect. It is here that the root of the present trouble in Rwanda lies and it has caused damage that will take years to repair. The same undermining system has been extended to our customs, our traditions, our culture and our way of life. People have been made to despise them

and seek for their abolition instead of respecting them, and finding ways of improving them. The effect of this is again self-evident.

Now we come to false reporting of the facts in Rwanda or at least the presentation of the facts in such a way that the world condemns Batutsi and Abashyirahamwe U.N.R. as reactionaries and regards APROSOMA and Bahutu as a liberation army fighting against the Batutsi "overlords" as they have been termed in the world press. The Belgians of course are represented as the fairy godmother whose departure the Bahutu are particularly anxious to stop for fear that the Batutsi will throw them back into bondage! There is no doubt that your administration has succeeded in creating this impression on the outside world by the virtue of the fact that you have had the monopoly of the world press which has not had an opportunity of examining the other side of the coin. We shall pick up only a few of the things reported to illustrate our point:

1. The world has been made to understand that the Bahutu have been a subject race to the Batutsi for centuries. This is partially true but Your Excellency knows that there was no such rigid line of demarcation making all Bahutu serfs and all Batutsi overlords. Meritorious Bahutu were made Batwale (chiefs) and crossed into Batutsi lines as poor Batutsi became Bahutu. There are many examples to illustrate this. Batutsi and Bahutu became Bagaragu (serfs) alike and the great majority of both were peasants tilling their land (mirima) or looking after their cattle. A Mututsi who did not possess any cattle resorted to cultivation, married among the Bahutu and became a Muhutu while a Muhutu who had many cattle married among the Batutsi and his issue became Batutsi. If your Excellency takes any trouble to study the geneology of the present Senior Chiefs in Rwanda, les chefs, you will find that at least 25% of them are of Bahutu origin. Dr. Kagame can give you all the necessary information. Bugaragu or Ubuhake, (serfdom) which was voluntary, applied to Bahutu and Batutsi alike and ikoro (tribute) was collected from Bahutu and Batutsi alike. Military service at the time of war again applied to Bahutu and Batutsi equally. In actual fact the truth of the matter is that serfdom came with the Belgian Administration. When forced and unpaid labour (akazi), taxes for head, cattle and wives, and punishment by flogging were introduced, then the chiefs being used as Administration Agents began to appear as the oppressors of the common people. Again this oppression applied to Batutsi and

Bahutu alike. Again when the Nyanza School was started it was the Missionaries that limited it to sons of chiefs and later on when Astrida College was started it was the government that limited Administration course to sons of chiefs. Perhaps you will remember that it was through the efforts of the late Umwami that forced labour and punishment by flogging was stopped, and it was again through him that Ubuhake (serfdom) was abolished. You will also remember that the Council Superior du Pay in its memorandum requested that all ranks of chieftainships should be thrown open to direct elections by the common people. Is all this what you understand by bondage?

2. The world has been told that Bahutu were attacking Batutsi villages and that military operations were extremely difficult because of the mountains and forests in the Country. Your Excellency knows only too well that there is no such a thing as Bahutu and Batutsi villages!!! You know that all Banyarwanda whether Bahutu or Batutsi live together in the same villages and have always done so. You also know that there are no inaccessible mountains and impenetrable forests in Rwanda!!! Further, you know that the worst centres of fighting have been Gitarama and Ndiza where APROSOMA has roots being near Kabwayi Mission, the sanctuary of Gitera and Kayibanda, Ruhengeri where the Administrateur and the head of Rwaza Mission are well known supporters of APROSOMA and Kibuye where Bwanakweri and Seruvumba are. Deductions from this could be very interesting. Surely if each sous chef was given a patrol of about a dozen armed soldiers they would have put down the rising in a very short time.

3. The world has been told that this trouble was sparked off by a statement signed by U.N.R. advocating for killing Bahutu leaders and calling them serpents! That actually could be a question word for word taken from one of the many of Gitera's and Kayibanda's literature. Now, Your Excellency has the manifesto and all other literature of U.N.R. Does violence appear in any of them? You also know personally all the leaders of U.N.R., Rukeba the president is in actual fact a Muhutu himself, how could he preach destruction on his own brothers? Kayihura a very prominent chief and one of the leaders is of Bahutu origin - the greatest majority of the holders of the party cards are Bahutu - how could they subscribe to such a literature? Was the alleged leaflet signed by any of the leaders? Is there any proof in actual fact that the leaflet if it exists was an official issue

of the Party's Executive Committee? Yet we can produce for you several documents written by APROSOMA - by Gitera, Kayibanda, Munyangaju and others, preaching murder, arson, destruction, and extermination of the Batutsi over the last two years. We can also prove to you that these documents were shown to your administration which refused to do anything to restrain the authors from producing such venom. This of course makes stronger the current belief that they were instigated by your government. We submit that UNR had nothing to gain by starting violence and also had no cause to do so while they had every cause to avoid it and therefore that they could not possibly have started it.

4. The world has been told that the present trouble is a rising of the Bahutu against their Batutsi overlords. To an outsider not conversant with history of Rwanda, recent events there and the conditions obtaining there now, it would appear that the Bahutu suddenly and without a warning rose against the Batutsi - indeed that is the effect it is calculated to produce. In actual fact as Your Excellency knows the initiators of this have been a few followers of Gitera and Kayibanda who after looking for signatures of people to refuse the accession of the new Umwami and failing, and who realizing that there were fast becoming unpopular decided to start violence in order to cause panic in the country and fish in troubled waters. In actual fact the current rumour in the country is, if Your Excellency is kept informed of such rumours, that Gregory Kayibanda received the sum of 120,000 francs from a source in Bukavu to hire the initial 200 thugs who started house burning in Gitarama! We submit that rather than plan the popular tune of "civil war" between Bahutu and Batutsi, you should seriously look for the root of the trouble. It is simply ridiculous to talk of Bahutu raiding Batutsi villages or Batutsi calling on their Batwa archers to carry out reprisals and such other nonsense. If the venomous APROSOMA literature had been discouraged, the country would not have been plunged into all this bloodshed. Much of the blame lies with leisure activities of some of your officers and some of the Missionaries appealing on sectarian differences to stir up trouble.

5. The world has been informed that the late Umwami, Nyiringoma Umwami Mutara III Rudahigwa of blessed memory died of a "long disease". This shocks us greatly. Your Excellency was, we thought, a personal friend of the late Umwami

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and you know as well as we do that he was far from being an invalid that he was presented to the world. In actual fact he was the strongest man we knew of. When he flew to Usumbura two days before he died he was as healthy as any one could be - when he went to see his doctor on Saturday morning at about 11.00 a.m., he was perfectly healthy and it was a routine visit that he usually paid him. We do not know what happened in the two or three hours between the time he entered the doctor's room and the time when his death was announced to the world except that the doctor's statement that he gave him an injection, after which he died suddenly. The official information given concerning his death keeps changing. At first it was heart failure, then it was cerebral haemorrhage, then statement that when he went to see his doctor he was not ill but he died suddenly, and now after a number of months the world is told that he died of a long disease!! In view of these contradictions, can you blame the people for being suspicious? Surely all Banyarwanda have a right to know what their beloved monarch died of and your administration should make up its mind as to the cause of his death. A few interesting co-incidences just before his death such as Gitera's writings "prophesying" the events almost to the date, the measuring of the spot where he was buried before he died, erecting of flag posts near Europeans' residences in Nyanza and the fact that all officials "forgot" to wear black arm bands over their white ceremonial uniforms at his funeral - all strengthen the belief. So do the subsequent efforts to stop the customary installation of the new Umwami before lowering into the grave the body of the deceased one. Contradictory official reports of the cause of his death do not help to clear this suspicion and the whole mystery surrounding his death. We feel that the Banyarwanda have a right to know exactly what happened to their beloved monarch in those two or three mysterious hours.

We have pointed out only a few drops in an ocean of anomalies, injustices and distortions; we know your administration's reaction will be "Punish them! Imprison them!" You cannot say deport them because we are already out of the country! They will also start a smear campaign against us -- But we feel very strongly that the truth must be told.

We petition for only a few things which are the first elementaries of any democracy:-

1. That the present troubles must be put to an end at once and with no more force than is warranted by circumstances and without victimization of any sect. Your Excellency understands what we mean, we hope.

2. That after restoration of peace and order, your administration should not take it as an excuse to maintain the state of emergency longer than is absolutely necessary - we very strongly suspect that the tendency will be to keep the Country under military rule for as long as possible.

3. That you request the United Nations to send an independent Commission of inquiry immediately to investigate the root of the trouble. The present events and the way they have been reported has made us lose confidence in the impartiality and justice of your administration. We also request that when this Commission comes, witnesses should be allowed to come forward to give evidence freely without intimidation and victimization, present or future.

4. That you instruct your administrators to stop meddling into local politics and stirring sectarian discontent and hatred - they should learn by what has happened in the country that they are bungling amateurs in the game of divide and rule. Can tell us one single reason why the Bahutu should rise against the Batutsi at a time when forced labour, serfdom, and flogging have long been abolished and when the same "Batutsi" have petitioned that all ranks of chieftainship should be thrown open to direct elections and the present Umwami has of his own free will chosen to be a constitutional monarch?

5. That frustration and victimization of some political parties and patronage of others should stop forth with and people allowed to follow freely political parties of their own free choice.

6. That direct and indirect undermining of our King's dignity and prestige, and existence of his regalia, our customs and traditions and our institutions and way of life should also stop.

7. That your role as trustees in Rwanda should be that of teachers and advisers and not of rulers. All Banyarwanda's loyalty should be to their Umwami, his Council of Ministers and the chiefs of their own choice first and foremost and to you only through them.

We hope Your Excellency will study this memorandum carefully and spend more time on studying the points raised therein than in studying the best method of punishing or discrediting the authors.

N.B. The latest information we have heard so far is that until 10th of this month your soldiers did nothing to stop the acts of violence, they only patrolled the towns and guarded European residences. We hear the excuses given by the local administrators is that your administration does not want to interfere lest the Bahutu think they are supporting to Batutsi. That they are anxious not to take sides. It was also said that the trouble widespread in the country and that there were not enough soldiers to restore peace and order. Since this information comes from Ruhengeri, Gitarama, Astrida and Kibuye with amazing agreement, there must be a policy behind it all. It is an interesting co-incidence that all this should happen so soon after your meeting with all your senior officials in Usumbura!!

We have the honour to be
Your Excellency's obedient
humble servants

(Signed) F.T. HIGIRO

President

Signed for and on behalf of
ABANYARWANDA NA ABARUNDI ABADAHEMUKA

(Signatures appended)

Copy to:

Secretary-General, UNO.,
Chairman, Trusteeship Council and Members,
Minister of Colonies for Congo and Ruanda-Urundi,
Governor-General for Congo Belge and Ruanda-Urundi.

There follows a list of 64 signatures.
