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STANDING COMMITTEE ON PETITIONS

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SEVENTY-SEVENTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Tuesday, 23 June 1953, at 10.30 a.m.

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Requests for oral hearings concerning petitions relating to the  
Trust Territory of Ruanda-Urundi (T/L.336; T/C.2/L.29) (continued)

PRESENT:

Chairman:

Mr. QUIROS El Salvador

Members:

Mr. CASSIERS Belgium

Mr. ROMANACCE-CHALAS Dominican Republic

Mr. SCOTT New Zealand

Mr. ZONOV Union of Soviet Socialist  
Republics

Mr. McKAY United States of America

Also present:

Mr. RYCKMANS Belgium

Mr. SCHEYVEN Special Representative of the  
Administering Authority for the  
Trust Territory of Ruanda-Urundi

Secretariat:

Mr. BERENDSEN Assistant Secretary of the  
Committee

REQUESTS FOR ORAL HEARINGS CONCERNING PETITIONS RELATING TO THE TRUST TERRITORY  
OF RUANDA-URUNDI (T/L.336; T/C.2/L.29) (continued)

Petition from ex-Chief Bigiranza (T/PET.3/62 and Add.1 and 2)

SCHEYVEN (Special Representative) amplified the written observations of the Administration (T/OBS.3/3).

Mr. MCKAY (United States of America) pointed out that the main complaints of the petitioner had already been dealt with in resolution 440 (X), in which the Council decided that petition T/PET.3/41 called for no action on its part. He considered that there was no justification for granting a hearing.

Mr. RYCKMANS (Belgium) recalled that the Council had already given its decision on the main complaints of the petitioner; moreover, the petition was inadmissible, since it concerned disputes with which the courts had competence to deal.

With regard to the question of wages and taxes, the Administering Authority had supplied all possible information in its annual report and the petitioner could add nothing fresh.

He concluded, therefore, that it would be purposeless to invite the petitioner to appear before the Council.

In reply to questions by Mr. ZONOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), Mr. SCHEYVEN (Special Representative) said that the petitioner had been in the service of the Administration, either as interpreter or as sub-chief, from 1916 to 1932, at which date he had been relieved of his office. Apart from his pay he had enjoyed substantial dues, amounting to 13 working days a year from each contributory, not to mention the provision of foodstuffs.

Mr. ZONOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) thought that if the petitioner compared the present situation with conditions prevailing during the period of the mandate, he would note that no progress had been made in recent years and that Europeans were still paid far higher salaries than the local population

Mr. RYCKMANS (Belgium) pointed out that the status of Belgian officials, who devoted all their time to their duties, could not be compared with that of indigenous chiefs, who enjoyed various privileges and advantages. Nor did he think that the presence of Mr. Bigiraneza could assist the Trusteeship Council to study the question of the pay of European officials and indigenous chiefs.

Mr. ZONOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) concluded that there was still gross inequality between the salaries paid to Europeans and Africans in Ruanda-Urundi. He was not satisfied with the explanations given by the Administering Authority and he proposed that the Committee should recommend the Trusteeship Council to grant an oral hearing to the petitioner.

The USSR proposal that the petitioner should be granted a hearing was rejected by 3 votes to 1, with 2 abstentions.

Petition from ex-Chief Ntunguka (T/FET.3/65 and Add.1 and 2; T/OBS.3/3)

Mr. SCHEYVEN (Special Representative) confirmed and amplified the written observations of the Administering Authority (T/OBS.3/3).

Mr. BERENDSEN (Assistant Secretary of the Committee) informed the Committee that the Secretariat had received the letters referred to by the petitioner in his latest communication (T/FET.3/65/Add.2), which had been received on 3 June 1953, and that a reply had been sent to the effect that a decision would be taken at the beginning of the twelfth session of the Trusteeship Council.

Mr. ZONOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked if the Secretariat had replied to the petitioner's earlier letters.

Mr. BERENDSEN (Assistant Secretary of the Committee) replied that the Secretariat had never received the original of the letter dated 9 February. On 8 May 1953, it had acknowledged receipt of the letter of 26 April containing a copy of that of 9 February. Mr. Ntunguka had apparently not received the Secretariat's reply at the time of writing his last letter.

Mr. MCKAY (United States of America) asked whether the Special Representative could make some remarks on the subject of the letter T/PET.3/65/Add.2; particularly with regard to the fourth paragraph.

Mr. SCHEYVEN (Special Representative) expressed great surprise that the petitioner should have been in prison for five days with neither food nor drink. He had probably refused to eat.

With regard to vaccination, it was a very important precautionary measure and a notable could not be allowed to evade it. It was not for the Administration's benefit but for that of the indigenous inhabitants themselves that such a precaution was taken.

Mr. MCKAY (United States of America) noted that the petitioner complained again and again that he had been subjected to all kinds of persecution since submitting his petition to the United Nations. He would like to be given some details concerning the policy of the local authorities in the matter of the right to petition.

Mr. SCHEYVEN (Special Representative) could assure the Committee that the right to petition was absolutely respected throughout the Territory of Ruanda-Urundi and that no petitioner had ever been subjected to persecution.

Mr. RYCKMANS (Belgium) declared that all the matters on which Mr. Ntunguka wished to be given a hearing fell within the competence of the courts. As for the Rwasha case, it was some 33 years old. He outlined its history, confirmed the written observations of the Administering Authority and concluded by saying that there was no reason for the Council to grant a hearing to Mr. Ntunguka.

Mr. MCKAY (United States of America) said that a member of the United States delegation, who had been one of the Mission which had visited Ruanda-Urundi, had declared that the petitioner had been afforded every opportunity of presenting his complaints to the Mission.

In its resolution 441 (X) the Council had taken a decision concerning his earlier petition. As the present petition was similar to the previous one, it did not seem proper to comply with the request for a hearing.

The request of ex-Chief Ntunguka for a hearing was refused by 3 votes to none, with 3 abstentions.

Petition from Mr. Gaston Jovite Nzamwita (T/PET.3/64)

Mr. RYCKMANS (Belgium) pointed out that Mr. Nzamwita was not asking to be heard on his own behalf, but in order to speak for Mr. Bigiraneza and Mr. Ntunguka.

Mr. ZONOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) thought that as the petitioner had requested to represent Mr. Bigiraneza, with the consent of the latter, the Committee ought to grant him a hearing.

The CHAIRMAN, speaking as the representative of El Salvador, maintained that since the Committee had decided to refuse a hearing both to Bigiraneza and to Ntunguka, there could be no question of anyone else representing them.

The USSR proposal that Mr. Nzamwita should be granted a hearing was rejected by 3 votes to 1, with 2 abstentions.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.