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PETITION FROM THE BARUNDI STUDENTS AT LOVANUM UNIVERSITY
CONCERNING RUANDA-URUNDI

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rules of procedure of the Trusteeship Council.)

IS POLITICAL UNION BETWEEN RWANDA AND BURUNDI POSSIBLE?

Without going into too much historical detail, we can say that until the colonial period the kingdoms of Rwanda and Burundi always followed their separate destinies. They have made their way through history, sometimes at loggerheads, sometimes indifferent to each other. Both had their own political, administrative and social institutions, which had nothing in common but their names. The colonizers, whether German or Belgian, respected the individual structure of each territory and confined themselves merely to general administration. Never did it enter their minds to merge the institutions of the two States: that could not have been done without prejudicing the welfare of the people under their rule. The decision not to merge them, moreover, showed wisdom and an intelligent understanding of the individuality of the two peoples. Following a consistent policy, the colonial authorities transferred officials from the general administration of one State to that of the other without surprising anyone, which would not have been the case if this had been done with the indigenous authorities under the direct jurisdiction of the Bami. We would point out, also, that the idea of a union between the two territories has never been put into effect. Apart from the inefficient General Council, on which there were members from both States, nothing has been done to make the two peoples regard themselves as having a common destiny. The two Bami, the two State councils and the two provisional legislative assemblies set up more recently have never come to think in terms of a general plan for the future involving union. Only when the two adjoining States were jointly administered under trusteeship were identical general regulations applied to both.

The present modern institutions, chosen freely by the people, have developed from the fundamental structures, under guidance, and where necessary with some adjustment. Rwanda has adopted the republican system, and Burundi a constitutional monarchy.

Should an attempt now be made to combine the two regimes, each with its own distinct national basis? Is it, indeed, possible to unite the two countries without doing them considerable harm? We see, first of all, that now more than ever nations tend to strengthen the things which unite them rather than those which divide them. In the present state of affairs, isolation is synonymous with suicide. The idea of unification in respect of economic affairs, finance and even national defence is looked upon as presenting no immediately apparent difficulty, but the idea of political unification is always viewed with great reserve. In all such matters, Governments have to make their own choice, and isolation is unknown in international affairs today.

While admitting that principle as a principle, we do not consider it possible for the two States in question to enter into a political union. What would it be based on? Their existing institutions are quite unsuited to form such a basis. Furthermore, the fundamental political and social issues in the two States are quite different: Burundi's aim is to make sure that its institutions are well and truly established, Rwanda's to achieve national reconciliation, to re-establish law and order and to build up the new regime. In social matters, Burundi guarantees ethnic equality, whereas Rwanda is replacing one kind of inequality by another.

It goes without saying, moreover, that democracy requires respect for the freely expressed will of the inhabitants, unless they no longer have the right of self-determination! That is why it is no longer acceptable to impose anything on a people whether they like it or not, particularly in such a delicate sphere as politics. If anyone still has any doubts about the desire of these two States to follow their own separate political destinies, it would be enough to consult the people immediately. Moreover, it seems to us surprising that the representatives of the people have not been heeded. Is doubt being cast on the validity of the elections in Burundi? If not, why are the wishes of the

Government, as expressed by its representatives, being disregarded? We believe that it is for each State to form its own alliances freely, in whatever way seems to it advantageous. The discussions on the unification of Rwanda and Burundi merely increase the impatience of the Barundi, who legitimately expect immediate independence.

We may conclude by saying that a forced marriage only breeds domestic trouble. Join Burundi and Rwanda by force and you will have the most ill-assorted couple possible. You will have created a union which will only benefit United Nations visitors, who will then have a new opportunity for making reports and establishing trusteeships. It seems, therefore, that Rwanda and Burundi cannot be united, and that this is a problem to be avoided.

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