

UNITED NATIONS
TRUSTEESHIP
COUNCIL



Distr.
LIMITED

T/PET.3/L.121
24 June 1961
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

PETITION FROM MR. RULANGWA SIMON AND OTHERS CONCERNING RUANDA-URUNDI

(Circulated in accordance with rule 85, paragraph 2, of the rules of procedure of the Trusteeship Council)

Goma, 8 January 1961

The Chairman,
United Nations Commission in Ruanda-Urundi

Copies for information to:

H.M. Kigeli V of Rwanda
H.M. King Baudouin I of Belgium
The Secretary-General of the United Nations
The Resident-General at Usumbura
The Special Resident at Kigali

Sir,

We are disappointed to see Belgium stubbornly pursuing its destructive policy despite the goodwill manifested by us in an uninterrupted correspondence in which we have always called upon that country to follow the path of legality.

The wise United Nations recommendations made, firstly, by the visiting mission last March, secondly, by the Trusteeship Council in June and then confirmed by the General Assembly on 18 December 1960 could have opened the door first to a national reconciliation and then to reconciliation with Belgium. But the Administering Authority, by rejecting those recommendations, obstinately and greedily refuses to take the outstretched hand. We need not dwell on this, and you have been a witness to it yourself. For Belgium has never concealed its bad faith. Immediately after the United Nations decisions the Belgian representative had no hesitation in telling the General Assembly itself, quite openly so as to set the tone for his satellite parties, that he did not agree with the decisions. In order to influence the so-called Ostend Conference, Mr. d'Aspremont-Lynden, the Minister for African Affairs, said in his opening speech, in your presence, that the United Nations resolutions were mere recommendations which they were not compelled to follow.

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If our information is correct, a round-table reconciliation conference embracing all political parties was to take place after the return of the Mwami, the reinstallation of the refugees and the general amnesty for political prisoners. But the Administration, still pursuing its colonialist policy, has convened it before any of those conditions has been met and with a participation of its own choosing.

To ensure that its collaborators, from whom it can as usual count in advance for blanket approval, are in the majority the Administering Authority has taken care not to invite our parties, even though it has officially recognized them. On the other hand, it has invited the false and legally disputed Parmehutu Government.

Ever since their foundation our parties - even UMAR, which is older than all the other parties except APROSOMA - have been arbitrarily excluded from political meetings. Furthermore, other parties, because they are of Belgian creation, are admitted to those meetings even though at the time their only members were their officers. We have expressed our legitimate discontent to no avail; the Administering Authority maintains its stubborn silence. We wondered and still wonder what is the purpose of a political party if its co-operation is to be rejected automatically and what is the use of the recognition accorded it by the Administration.

As in the case of all the anti-democratic conferences which preceded it, we dispute the value of the Ostend Conference. That Conference can commit the participants only, not the Rwandese.

We denounce as gratuitous and fanciful the label "majority" which the Belgian Government, misusing the term, has applied to the Parmehutu party. The Parmehutu is in fact nothing but a small group of a few individuals sold by the colonialists to serve as loud-speakers. To that small number, of course, must be added the paratroopers sent to help them carry out all operations considered likely to favour their policy. When you hear the Parmehutu raging and threatening war, it is not on the basis of its own strength but on that of the Belgian army placed at its disposal. It is true that through the dictatorial powers with which the Administering Authority has invested it, Parmehutu has succeeded in imposing the sale of its membership cards, which are replacing the passes officially. That is why nearly all Rwandese still in their homeland have two cards: one of their

ideological affiliation, the other from Parmehutu, to protect them against all the various tortures being used. The size of the membership of each party in Rwanda can only become a valid factor after there is freedom of expression.

Another thing we cannot allow is that the Parmehutu Party should claim the right to represent the 85 per cent of the Rwandese people who are Bahutu. Since the overwhelming majority of our parties consists of Bahutus, we feel we are entitled to dispute that claim. The mass escape of the Bahutus, particularly those from the Kisenyi and Cyangugu territories, to the Congo following the Parmehutu reprisals, the 200 Hutu families from the Gahondo commune thrown out of their houses for refusing to take part in the false elections in June, and SEMBAGARE - KIMANKA - RUBABA - SENZOGA - MURIHANO - NTIBANYURWA and NTAWUMENYUMUNSI, all Hutus from the same commune, who were shot to death for the same reasons as above, and innumerable other similar cases are very eloquent proof that not all Bahutus have joined the Parmehutu.

As for the monarchy and the Mwami Kigeli V, we can find no more democratic formula than that of a referendum held after the restoration of peace and the fundamental freedoms. To exile the Mwami would be to spoil the Belgians and their Parmehutu too much and at no price could we bow to such injustice. We have the same attitude to the hasty elections which Belgium is advocating in order to secure the government for the Parmehutu party and so drag the country into a republican regime. We do not reject that regime for its own sake, but because it does not have the consent of the people whom we represent. It is for us Rwandese alone to choose, free of any foreign influence, the form of government suited to our homeland. We therefore request the United Nations, and in particular the United Nations Commission sent to Ruanda-Urundi, to rid us of Belgian intrigues.

Should the Ostend Conference, against all logic, impose its decisions by threatening war, we should know that justice no longer exists and that violence alone is in fashion, and we, too, shall resort to the same weapon. We know that Belgium derides us because it sees that our reason is confronted by a military force of paratroopers which it has succeeded in keeping on our poor territory and a force of Parmehutu soldiers recruited for the purpose. But Belgium should know that the strength we lack today we can get tomorrow and that it will never win.

As to the civil war which the Administering Authority and its imposed Parmehutu Government seem to predict, it is certainly purely a Belgian plan. If the United Nations has not taken the necessary steps it is inevitable. Nor should it come as a surprise to the United Nations, as we gave warning of it in our manifesto of 14 November 1960. See page 2 of that document, where we say:

The state of emergency is still in force. The military occupation, instead of being slackened, has been strengthened by a Parmehutu army created by the Administering Authority to provide that party with the means of oppressing the other parties. That Parmehutu army has mainly been formed in order to support a future revolution which Belgium is organizing in case the United Nations should intervene directly to restore public freedoms in Rwanda.

For Belgium, knowing that truth was on our side, has always preached revolution to the people so that it might win illegally by force a victory which legally it was bound to lose. That was why, knowing this, we called in the conclusions of that same manifesto for the immediate termination of Belgian Trusteeship and the evacuation of Belgian troops.

Seeing the Belgian attitude towards its decisions, the United Nations will certainly agree with us that it has been too gentle with the Belgian Administration in not complying with our demand. It probably thought it was dealing with a humane, democratic and conciliatory government, but it has to deal with a Belgian Government which we shall refrain from describing lest the truth drive us to rudeness.

CONCLUSIONS

We demand the return of the Mwami to his people. The latter's devotion to its sovereign is beyond question. For us the referendum was not even necessary, but since the colonialist manoeuvres have sown doubts in the international world, we accept this on condition that it is held some time after fundamental rights have been restored. Such period of time must be long enough to convince us that the regime of terror now raging is over.

We request the United Nations Commission to implement the Organization's resolutions in full as a matter of urgency. If Belgium had to approve the decisions of the ninety-eight countries, we would wonder why all countries in the world should address themselves to the United Nations and not to Belgium, and we would question the wisdom of having the Commission in Ruanda-Urundi if it were to be subject to Belgian caprice.

We insist that the Belgian troops be withdrawn immediately. How can you expect an enemy, which is unwilling to loosen its grip, to guarantee our security? How can the consultations awaiting people be termed free when order is secured by a police force known in advance to consist of assassins? What will be the attitude of the paratroopers during that Belgian-inspired war?

We demand the immediate replacement of the Parmehutu army by a national army, which must not be based on ideological or ethnical tendencies.

Disheartened by the Belgian Administration's regrettable and destructive attitude towards the United Nations decisions, we demand more than ever the immediate termination of Belgian trusteeship unless it is desired that Belgian intrigues should continue to create tension in Rwanda and so make national reconciliation impossible. We demand it, unless it is desired to widen the ditch already dug between Rwanda and Belgium, the only digger of which is the Belgian Government, though it is supposed to be Catholic. We demand it, unless it is desired that, when our independence comes, we should say goodbye to Belgian colonialism and not to Belgium. For the capricious abuse of power by the Administering Authority merely embitters us and makes of the Belgian a perpetual enemy.

Lastly, we demand it because, by abusing its trusteeship rights, it is trying to turn Rwanda into a battlefield for Belgium and the Congo, which sets a poor precedent for our relations with this brother country.

For the Mouvement de l'Unité Rwandaise, MUR

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Authorized Agent

For the Alliance des Abakiga, ABAKI

Kaberuka Denis
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For the Union des Aborozi Africains du Rwanda-Urundi, UAARU

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