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PETITION FROM THE CHAIRMEN OF THE BATUTSI OF RUHAHE AND BUTAMENWA
CONCERNING RUANDA-URUNDI

(Circulated in accordance with rule 85 and supplementary rule F of
the rules of procedure for the Trusteeship Council)

Usumbura, 22 December 1954.

United Nations
New York

Gentlemen,

I have the honour to inform you that on 24 November 1954, we saw the following arrive: MWAMBUTSA, the Mwami of Urundi, the Resident of Urundi, the Territorial Administrator of Kihanga, and the Agricultural Expert. They called us all to a meeting, at which the Resident told us that, as from that date, the land had been taken over by the MAE [Anti-Erosion Mission] for the plantation and cultivation of sugar cane and that, before occupying the land, the MAE would pay us an indemnity. When you have been paid, you will have another place to keep your cattle, he said.

We answered that we did not need their money and did not wish to sell the land, which suits our cattle. We added that the MAE might just as well take the land offered to us in exchange. Show it to the MAE and we will stay where we are.

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The Resident replied as follows: "Whether you agree or not, it doesn't matter; I am still going to give the land to the MAE." - The Mwami then told the Resident that the land had belonged to us since our grandfathers' time and we had the right either to sell it or to refuse to sell it. I have no right to deprive them of this land by force, and I cannot do so. - The Agricultural Expert then told the Mwami that they must occupy the land come what might, and the Mwami should help them to obtain it. - The Mwami told the Agricultural Expert that he could not do so, unless you and these men agree that the land shall be sold to you; if they do, I shall acquiesce. The Resident concluded by saying that they would return in 15 days' time to discuss the matter,

Three days later, the Territorial Administrator of Kihanga and the Agricultural Expert came back without the Mwami and the Resident. They called us together and asked each one his name and how many head of cattle he possessed. Finally, they forced us to affix our thumbprints to the papers. We all hesitated and then refused. Seeing this, they hustled and hit us, saying that they would take the land and that if our cattle died, so much the worse for them, since we were enemies because we had discussed matters concerning Ruanda-Urundi with you.

We ask you whether the MAE is a firm or company, or whether it represents the Government itself. - At Uvira (Belgian Congo), where the MAE is already operating, they did not begin as they have done here. First of all there was an agreement, and they came to a friendly arrangement with regard to the price of the land they wished to buy. Later they paid over the money in the presence of a Government official.

The Ruanda-Urundi Government is becoming a trading concern. Moreover we are still obliged to pay taxes on our cattle. This year we have paid 65 francs per head of cattle, plus the veterinary surgeon's tax of 20 francs per year per head of cattle. In spite of all this, we pay the taxes regularly in order to protect our cattle, although some of us have 300 head apiece and others more than 500.

We do not understand why the Government is harassing us in this way. Our cattle eat the bush grass and drink the river water. Why are we the only ones to be treated in this way? In the Congo, there are cattle that came from Ruanda-Urundi; why do not all these taxes have to be paid on them?

We place the matter in your hands and shall be on the watch for your answer. The U.N. has not been established for nothing: its purpose is to consider questions and judge well. In order to annoy us, the Ruanda-Urundi Government is transferring people from the hills to our land; it is giving them the land we occupy to cultivate and build on for the profit of the Government, and when our cattle go near their plantations, we are fined.

We have the honour to be, etc.

Kagimbi and Mavungu,
Chairmen of the Batutsi of Ruhaha
and Butamenwa

(Signed): Kagimbi
Mavungu
