

Another Congo ?

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“First of all” said Adlai Stevenson not long ago, when asked about the United Nations’ latest African problem, “I find very few people who even know where Ruanda-Urundi is or what it is.”

Well, to begin with, Ruanda-Urundi is actually two countries, which the natives call Rwanda and Burundi. Once a part of German East Africa, they were mandated to Belgium after World War I and administered as a single trust territory. Slightly larger than Maine, they lie along the slopes of the Mountains of the Moon between Tanganyika, Uganda and the Congo. For 40 years, Belgium tampered little with the feudal tribal structure of either territory and ruled through the giant-sized Watutsi tribe (average height : 6 ft. 6 in.).

Although the Watutsi comprised only 14 % of the population of 5,000,000, they kept the Bahutu majority and the Batwa Pygmies in a state of virtual serfdom. Cattle feudalism was the basis of the system. The hapless Bahutu were forbidden to own or kill cattle; they could get beef only when cattle died of natural causes. Each Watutsi’s wealth, prestige, and political position were measured by the size of his herd, and every cow was regarded as a sister in his family.

Edsel & Friend. Two years ago,

Belgium decided to set the territory free, and drew up a timetable for independence. Belgium hoped that the two territories would tie together in a single economic and political entity, but the hope was futile. Burundi’s Watutsi ruler, Mwami (King) Mwambutsa IV, had made such a concentrated effort to dilute the caste system that in free elections the Bahutu majority overwhelmingly voted for a separate constitutional monarchy under his leadership. Genuinely popular with both the Watutsi and the Bahutu, Mwambutsa is an accomplished amateur magician who nightly performs his feats of prestidigitation as he tools around the hot spots of his capital city. Usumbura, in a white Edsel convertible, accompanied by his equally white Belgian girl friend.

In Rwanda, meanwhile, Belgium successfully threw its support behind the long suppressed Bahutu, who immediately rose up in bloody revolt against their Watutsi overlords. Although for centuries they had practiced a sort of subfeudal oppression, the Watutsi were openly backed by Russia, in and out of U.N., simply because they were vehemently anti-Belgian. But Bahutu numbers told. The Bahutu burned scores of Watutsi villages to the ground, cut scores of willowy Watutsi warriors literally down to size by sli-

cing their legs off at the knees. Rwanda's Mwami Kigeri V fled into exile along with 142,000 supporters, and the Bahutu set up a republican parliamentary Belgium-backed government.

Cockroach Invasion. Last week, with the approach of final independence for the Kingdom of Burundi and the Republic of Rwanda, the U.N. Trusteeship Committee was fiercely debating the future of two non-nations, both spectacularly unready to stand on their own feet. On July 1 the last remaining Belgian forces (900 paratroopers) hope to begin a phased withdrawal. But, still shaken by the specter of the Congo disaster, even such normally ardent "anticolonialist" powers as India and Ghana have wondered if the new countries' independence should not be delayed. Economically both territories are destitute; natural resources are few and per capita income is approximately \$40 per year. There are no railroads in either country, and Rwanda has only a half-mile of paved road. Nearly 75 % of the population is illiterate; Burundi has only one African doctor and one trained lawyer who is now a political exile. Government has sputtered to a virtual halt as thousands of Belgian civil servants have fled with the memory of the

Congo's pillage and rape still fresh.

Riven by the dispute between the Bahutu and the Watutsi, Rwanda lives under the constant threat of massacre. From neighboring countries, the Watutsi exiles have organized guerrilla raiding parties called the *inyenzi* ("cockroaches," so named because they work at night), whose avowed purpose is to reinvade Rwanda and restore the Watutsi monarchy after the Belgians leave. Paradoxically, any U.N. decision to postpone Rwanda's independence because of this fear of violence would only worsen the situation, as the Bahutu would blame the Watutsi and step up their campaign of vengeance.

At the U.N., Russia gleefully ignored all such problems, insisted that any delay would simply be due to vile Belgian machinations. As for the Belgians, Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak pleaded that his country has no desire whatever to stay on, but argued that it is a joint responsibility of Belgium and the U.N. to provide for law and order after independence and to draw up a plan of administrative and economic aid. Spaak clearly wanted to avoid having Belgium held solely responsible for possible disorder and bloodshed, as it was after its hasty withdrawal from the Congo.