

Rebels in Rwanda Said to Slay 3 Bishops and 10 Other Clerics

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In another of the massacres that have punctuated Rwanda's two-month tribal war, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Kigali, two other bishops and 10 priests were killed on Wednesday by soldiers of the rebellious Rwanda Patriotic Front.

An official of the rebel group, which is dominated by the minority Tutsi tribe, acknowledged today that the killings were committed by "misguided" rebel soldiers who had been assigned to guard the clerics at a religious center at Kabgaye in southwestern Rwanda.

All of the slain bishops were members of the majority Hutu tribe and two of them had ties to the late President, Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu whose death two months ago in a suspicious plane crash sparked the latest revival of Rwanda's recurrent tribal conflict.

Radio Muhabura, the voice of the rebel front, quoted Lieut. Col. Frank Mugambaga, the rebel commander in the western town of Gitarama, as saying the bishops and priests were killed by "undisciplined soldiers" who had been sent to guard them. The soldiers thought these clergymen had been implicated in the earlier massacre of their own families, according to Co-

lonel Mugambaga. He said the soldiers would be severely punished.

Last month Pope John Paul II asked the Security Council to declare the church center at Kabgaye, where some 30,000 refugees, mostly Tutsis, are sheltering, a safe area and to send United Nations forces to protect it. But the Council ignored the request and the tiny United Nations force in Kigali said it could not accept responsibility for Kabgaye unless it was reinforced.

At that time there were fears that a continued rebel advance on Kabgaye would cause the Rwandan Army, which was protecting the refugees, to retreat, leaving them at the mercy of Hutu death squads. In fact, however, the rebel front managed to capture the religious center and hold it without the feared massacre occurring.

Council Backs U.N. Force

On Wednesday, the Security Council voted to deploy a new force of 5,500 soldiers in Rwanda with instructions to protect refugees and vulnerable civilians and help aid workers caring for them. But the United Nations has still not been promised all the troops it needs for the operation, and it will

be at least a month before the soldiers it has collected are fully equipped and ready to start their mission. Today the British charity Oxfam accused the Clinton Administration of dragging its feet over deployment of the force, allowing thousands of people to die.

“During the past months of slaughter, the United States has been the key player in halting action on Rwanda, creating a series of excuses and inventing problems that do not exist,” Oxfam’s senior policy adviser, Justin Forsyth, said in London.

“Its previous insistence on only deploying troops on the borders and its demand troops are deployed in phases has been nothing but a fig leaf hiding what is in effect a callous disregard for the lives of thousands of Rwandans,” Mr. Forsyth added.

Criticism of Washington

American human rights organizations, like Africa Watch, have been similarly critical of the Clinton Administration’s reluctance to see the United Nations become involved in the Rwandan fighting. The United Nations Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has said the Security Council’s slow response to what he has termed “genocide” in Rwanda is “a scandal”.

In a statement directed to Rwanda’s Roman Catholics, Pope John Paul said today that he joined them in “deploring the cruel death of Archbishop Vincent Nsengiyumva of Kigali; Bishop Thaddee Nsengiyumva of Kabgaye, the president of the Bishops’ Conference of Rwanda; and Bishop Joseph Ruzindana of Byumba, as well as several priests and religious officials.”

“May the pastors who disappeared with so many of their fallen brothers

and sisters during fratricidal confrontations find forever in the Kingdom of Heaven the peace which was denied them in their beloved land,” the Pope said.

Human rights campaigners say Archbishop Nsengiyumva, 58, was deeply involved in the country’s turbulent politics as a member of the central committee of President Habyarimana’s party, which has been accused of planning a campaign of genocide against the Tutsis. Bishop Ruzindana was a relative of the late President. It was unclear whether the two Nsengiyumvas were related.

Alison Des Forges, an American expert on Rwanda working with Africa Watch, said today she has received reports from Belgian Catholic contacts asserting that at a meeting in Kabgaye on May 24, Hutu militia leaders presented the Archbishop with a list of 16 priests, a nun and a lay person they wished to take away. The Archbishop gave his consent and the people disappeared, according to reports.

Rwanda’s U.N. Council Seat

Meanwhile a campaign is getting under way here to remove Rwanda from its seat on the United Nations Security Council, which is occupied by a Hutu representative of the Government, which now controls only about half the country and is generally believed to be responsible for the majority of the civilian deaths in Rwanda over the last two months. The United Nations said today that it has received reliable reports of another massacre on Monday night in which 70 civilians, many of them presumed to be Tutsis and including seven priests, were killed in the Nyamirambo district of south-

western Kigali, which is controlled by Government soldiers and militiamen.

By coincidence, Rwanda is due to take over the presidency of the Council in September, just as world leaders will be gathering here for the opening of the next United Nations General Assembly. The rebel front has already challenged the right of Rwanda's representative, Jean-Damascene Bizimana, to represent his country on the Security Council as well as his right to vote on resolutions affecting Rwanda. Article 27 of the United Nations Charter says "a party to a dispute shall refrain from

voting."

So far the United Nations' own lawyers have taken a cautious approach saying only that the Hutu Government "can in our opinion legally be contacted and dealt with by the United Nations in the same manner as other potential contributors to the peace process in Rwanda." The legal department also notes that Article 27 of the Charter has been "observed more in the breach than in its implementation," pointing out that Britain voted on resolutions on its dispute with Argentina over the Falkland Islands.