

Zaire Reopens One Crossing From Rwanda

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Zaire reopened one of its two border crossings to southwest Rwanda today after a daylong standoff between thousands of desperate Rwandans and Zairian soldiers that started within a half-hour of the departure of the last French troops.

The refugees were twice driven back after they threatened to surge over the narrow bridge that had been the pathway to asylum for thousands before it was closed on Saturday. While United Nations representatives shuttled between Zairian officials and the leaders of a cadre of angry Rwandan refugees, most of them teen-agers, boatmen did a brisk business carrying refugees across the Rusizi River under the noses of preoccupied Zairian soldiers.

One Crossing Opened

Although the crossing to the center of overcrowded Bukavu remained closed, Zaire opened another bridge, a day's walk away, and agreed to allow refugees to enter if the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees would take them by truck to a camp in the countryside.

The trouble began when the last of the 2,500 French left the safe zone they had created in Rwanda to a United Nations force of about 100 Ethiopian sol-

diers.

Shortly after 7 A.M., hundreds of refugees charged past the peacekeepers and across the bridge. Zairian troops fired automatic weapons into the air, driving them back to Rwanda. Zairian troops massed at one end of the bridge while Rwandans and their youthful leaders formed a human blockade at the other and refused to allow traffic to cross.

At midmorning Zairian troops placed a heavy machine gun on a bluff and then advanced toward the mass of refugees. Striking the refugees with bamboo sticks and firing into the air, the soldiers drove them from the bridge and then retreated. No one was wounded by gunfire.

The refugees responded with a sticks and stones and returned to the bridge. Both sides held their positions, even after the compromise, until heavy rains and night fell. The agreement angered many relief groups, who have complained about the shortage of trucks here, and flew in the face of efforts by other United Nations agencies to convince Rwandans that their country is safe.

Kamal Morjane of Tunisia, the Africa director for the United Nations refugee agency, said about 50,000 Rwandans were waiting to cross today. He said he had been forced to agree

to the compromise to prevent a catastrophe.

Nearly two million Rwandans, most of them of the majority Hutu ethnic group, have entered Zaire in the last

month, first to avoid civil war and now out of fear that the victorious Rwandan Patriotic Front will avenge the mass killings of members of the Tutsi minority.