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QUESTION OF THE FUTURE OF RUANDA-URUNDI

Letter dated 31 January 1961 from the Permanent Representative  
of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the President  
of the General Assembly

In a letter addressed to you by the Permanent Representative of the USSR and reproduced on 28 January 1961 in document A/4689, Mr. Zorin, referring to Press reports, attributes to the Belgian Government the intention of holding general elections in the Trust Territory of Ruanda-Urundi before the resumption of the General Assembly, i.e. before 7 March 1961.

This allegation is completely unfounded. I therefore request that you will be so good as to circulate to the States Members of the United Nations the text of the attached letter, which Mr. Wigny, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, addressed on 25 January 1961 to Mr. Dorsinville, Chairman of the United Nations Commission established on 20 December 1960. This communication deals, inter alia, with the Belgian Government's decision to postpone the elections planned for the month of January 1961.

(Signed) Walter LORIDAN  
Permanent Representative of Belgium

ANNEX

Letter dated 25 January 1961 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs  
of Belgium addressed to the Chairman of the United Nations  
Commission for Ruanda-Urundi

In a letter dated 27 December 1960 you were good enough to question the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations on the Belgian Government's intentions with regard to the two resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 1960 concerning the future of Ruanda-Urundi and the question of the Mwami.

In this connexion I have the honour to inform you of the following considerations and decisions:

- A. As you know, the political conference recommended in paragraph 4 of resolution 1579 (XV) was held at Ostend from 7 to 12 January. The questions discussed there corresponded to the terms of the resolution. Your Commission attended the conference and was in a position to give the African representatives full information on the scope of the resolution. Thus the General Assembly's wishes on this point have been fully met.
- B. As to paragraph 2 of the resolution, I would remind you that the emergency régime was terminated on 14 November 1960. The Belgian Government is prepared to terminate all similar measures which may be in effect.

The Belgian Government will give effect to the general amnesty as soon as possible. It is withholding the benefits of this measure only from prisoners sentenced for crimes under the general law. It would be out of the question that, for example, murderers or torturers should be allowed to profit by the amnesty. In order to dispel any misunderstanding, the United Nations Commission will be permitted to consult, in situ, the court records in respect of convicted persons of that nature.

Moreover, the General Assembly's wishes regarding the return and rehabilitation of the political refugees meet with the entire approbation of the Administering Authority.

- C. A question of prime importance remains to be settled: the fixing of the date for the legislative elections.

The relaxed atmosphere which prevailed at the KISENYI and KITEGA discussions, of whose favourable conclusions the Commission is aware, was the outcome of the Belgian Government's policy of national reconciliation in Ruanda-Urundi.

The Belgian Government finds, however, that since late December 1960 the

political parties have again taken up an extreme position and abandoned the conciliatory attitude which they had adopted.

Thus in the past few days serious incidents, of a type which had not recurred for several months, have been reported.

The Government will naturally do everything in its power to preserve calm and order in the Territory, but it has already had occasion to draw the Commission's attention to the new and serious dangers involved in the application of the General Assembly's recommendation for postponement of the elections.

The Belgian Government had decided that these elections should take place at the beginning of 1961; that intention could not have been unknown to the United Nations Secretariat, since it is mentioned both in the Visiting Mission's report and in the report of the Trusteeship Council. Moreover, the conclusions of the Ostend conference must have convinced you that the immediate holding of elections would meet the desire of the vast majority among the local peoples, who are anxious to obtain, as quickly as possible, if not independence, at any rate institutions of internal self-government.

What the General Assembly has asked, at the last moment, is that the Administering Authority should not fulfil a formal undertaking given by it and already in process of execution - an extremely serious development. The Belgian Government has been placed in a dilemma: either it must fail to fulfil its undertaking, or it must fail to comply with the General Assembly's new recommendation. Anxious to conform with the General Assembly's views to the greatest possible extent, it has decided to postpone the legislative elections.

While your Commission has stated that it is bound by very strict terms of reference depriving it of any power of decision with regard to the election date desired by the United Nations, the Government has nevertheless taken note of the Commission's intention to do everything possible to submit its interim report to the General Assembly as soon as the current session is resumed.

It is confident that the General Assembly, duly appreciating the effort made by the Administering Authority, will give priority consideration to the Commission's report, and that the elections can be scheduled for a date following as closely as possible upon the resumption of its work.

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Lastly, the Government has noted that the staff which will be called upon to take part in your Commission's work will make it its duty to refrain from any interference in the Territory's internal problems and will be instructed to work in complete co-operation with the local authorities.

D. With regard to resolution 1580 (XV), the Belgian Government agrees to the holding of a referendum on the question of the Mwami, but considers that the Mwami's return should not take place before the referendum, as his presence cannot but be a serious source of internal dissension.

I hope, on behalf of the Belgian Government, that the above decisions and explanations will enable the Commission to leave shortly for Usumbura, where it will be warmly welcomed by the representatives of the Administering Authority.

(Signed) Pierre WIGNY

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