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PETITION FROM MR. ERNEST MEURICE CONCERNING RUANDA-URUNDI

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4 April 1961

Ernest Meurice,
Evangelist,
56, Rue Cl. Van Ophen,
Overijse.

Mr. Dag Hammarskjold,
Secretary-General of the United Nations,
New York, U.S.A.

Sir,

The socialist daily newspaper Le Peuple reported yesterday that Ghana was suggesting the recall of Belgian priests from the Congo.

This measure appears severe and probably impracticable, but it would be fair and would almost automatically restore peace in the Congo and in Ruanda-Urundi.

I am a Belgian. I was a missionary in Ruanda during the whole of 1959. As an ex-trade unionist, accustomed to observing and listening attentively to the grievances of my fellow-men, I can confirm what many before me have said about the criminal attempts to sow discord carried out by the majority of the Belgian administrators and colonialists, encouraged and supported by the Catholic missionaries and unfortunately also assisted by the silence of the Protestant missionaries. During my brief stay in Ruanda, I strove for the unity of the Munyarwanda people (without, however, interfering in politics), which set the colonial administrators and the Catholic missionaries against me. I can also confirm today that, in the area between Kigali and Gitarama, the Bahutu and the Batutsi continue to live on good terms.

Hundreds of Protestant missionaries, thousands of Banyarwanda, even the Catholic priests belonging to the country, and tens of thousands of Congolese, can confirm the interference of the missionaries and of the highly placed (white) Catholic clergy in the political life of the country. In the interest of the Universal Church of Jesus Christ, I strongly deplore this and many Belgian Catholic friends share my opinion.

This letter is merely to inform you that many Belgians understand that you are thus confronted with an extremely arduous, difficult and delicate task and that you have their full sympathy. You should also know that an infinitesimal minority (unfortunately) of the people in the country are courageously struggling for the cause of truth. Personally, associating myself with the action of these friends, I faithfully and zealously pray God to help you and your colleagues, by the power of His Spirit, a reality which has undoubtedly been forgotten by many men, but which is none the less real.

I am enclosing a Belgian Protestant weekly newspaper, in which I published an article "The Congolese Christian Church in the Crucible of Adversity". During my stay in Ruanda the same newspaper published an article on the situation in Ruanda in 1959, under the pseudonym of "Umunyakuri". If you are interested, I can try to find the relevant copy.

Reiterating my wishes for the complete success of your mission in the Congo and in Ruanda-Urundi, I have the honour to be, etc.

(Signed): E. Meurice
