

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

IMW-25
Ruanda Refugees

c/o Toni Nuti
Nsongezi, Uganda
August 2, 1962

Mr. Richard H. Nolte
Institute of Current World Affairs
366 Madison Avenue
New York 17, New York

Dear Mr. Nolte:

Until relatively recently Black Africa has been remarkably free from what the rest of the world has been getting increasingly used to: refugees. Now, however, there are a considerable number, both black and white, from South Africa, Ghana, Congo, Angola and more recently from what used to be the Belgian Trust Territory of Ruanda-Urundi, now two of the newest independent African nations, Ruanda and Burundi.

We left Kabale yesterday afternoon in what most people hoped was the first rain of the season. Two hours and eighty miles later we arrived at Nsongezi where we stayed with Toni Nuti (and her silver doggett monkeys, hippos, genets, oribi, reedbuck, klipspringer, cats and lone dog), a Florentine lady of great charm, who five years ago built her home on a small island plop in the middle of the Kagera River. At that point it forms the border between Uganda and Tanganyika, but twenty miles away is Ruanda whose uneasy calm since independence a month ago belies the political turmoil just below the surface.

Since last September refugees from Ruanda have been streaming across the border. The Uganda Government, assisted by a few voluntary agencies, has sheltered, fed and provided clothing and medical care for the majority of them. Today it is estimated there are approximately 30,000 refugees in Uganda (there are others in Tanganyika), mostly concentrated in the Oruchinga Valley just north of Nsongezi. Initially they were kept in temporary relief camps near the border, but in the interests of security and re-settlement most have been moved away from the border onto land made available by the native Kingdom of Ankole.

The refugees are generally considered to be Batutsi, the old feudal overlords in Ruanda, who have been pushed out by their previous serfs, the Bahutu. But as one official who works in Oruchinga told us, "In fact Batutsi probably account for less than a quarter of them. The rest are Bahutu or Banyaruanda who supported the Batutsi." This was certainly our impression as we drove for mile after mile through the settlements. Few of the refugees were as extraordinarily tall as everyone knows the Nilotic Watutsi to be.

Another indication that a minority actually are Batutsi is that Batutsi are cattlemen and not cultivators. This was a job left to the Bahutu, and in fact a large number of the refugees

are cultivators. This has led to two different types of re-settlement project, one for cultivators and one for cattle keepers.

In Mbarara we looked up Ian Sanderson, an ex-DC, who is in charge of refugee resettlement. "So far 42,000 refugees have crossed into Uganda. We have 25,000 in our camps and about 5,000 have settled with relatives and friends near the border, but we can't account for the rest. They probably are people who have crossed the border more than once and then returned.

"The refugees are divided into three areas. Oruchinga itself, the Oruchinga Relief Camp and the Lake Nakavali Cattle Resettlement Area." Oruchinga has about 9,000 people and is a long line of 36 settlements, each named after the area in Ruanda where its inhabitants came from. It is entirely for cultivators. Almost all are Bahutu although there are a few Watutsi who sold or lost their cattle on the way. Each settlement has about 1,000 acres held communally. "We wanted to give each settler his own piece of land, but they didn't want it. They plan to return to Ruanda and most felt that having their own piece of land would make them permanent settlers. Now they're beginning to ask for their own fields, and so we have changed our tactics and are beginning to break up the large plots.

"We tried to get them self-sufficient in food by June 30, but since they all planned to return to Ruanda by uhuru which was July 1, you can imagine what success we had. We have cut down on their rations though and I think before long they'll have their own crops. They'll have to!"

The Oruchinga Relief Camp is a processing camp where refugees stay until they have their own land and houses. Currently it is holding 6,000 people, 3,000 cultivators and 3,000 cattlemen. The Lake Nakavali Cattle Resettlement Area is only five weeks old but already has about 10,000 people and 17,000 cattle. Most of these have only recently arrived from the border camps.

The refugees are wellnourished. They get a daily ration, most of which is surplus American flour, and this satisfies their basic requirements. Those who own cattle also have milk which they can either drink or sell. As with the Masai their diet consists largely of a mixture of blood and milk, and those with cattle could probably be self-sufficient if they were pushed. Once they are settled, however, the ration is cut and the eventual aim is to dispense with it.

Mr. Sanderson considered they had been very lucky about health. "We have very few health inspectors working for us, but in spite of that we've had no epidemics or anything. As soon as each refugee crosses the border he's deloused and vaccinated, but that is all. On the whole we've been fantastically lucky. We've had a lot of small cases, and a good number have suffered from malaria, because there is none where they come from, but otherwise they've been a healthy group. Of course they do get into fights and rip each other open, but we haven't even had much of that. They do insist though, no matter what we tell them, on having cooking fires inside their grass huts. Every few days one goes up in smoke and we've had some serious burn cases."

Cattle and their health is a big problem. Lake Nakavali is an ideal rinderpest quarantine spot. Although a few tsetse flies remain, no cattle have yet been killed by them. Altogether only about 50 out of 17,000 head have been lost which is quite remarkable considering the long moves they have made. Their cattle should be in excellent shape as long as they don't burn the grazing land as is traditionally done at this time of the year. Already there have been some pretty spectacular bush fires but so far from natural causes.

Over the past year the refugees have cost the Uganda Government about \$600,000, a great deal of money for a poor country trying desperately to develop. With the exception of \$40,000 from the Oxford Famine Relief, they have received virtually no assistance. There are indications, however, that the UN may help out considerably, and that is what everyone is hoping for here.

Many people don't consider these refugees genuine. One hears of a number who arrive in Mercedes, and there are obviously plenty of bicycles around. We were even told reliably of a young boy who when questioned at the border said he would only be in Uganda for six weeks with his parents on holiday. After that he had to return to school. Nevertheless most arrived with little more than their handsome Ankole cattle.

"I think the majority left because they were frightened; a few even came over wounded," Mr. Sanderson said. "There's no doubt that there are a lot of hangers-on, but how can we judge what is sufficient to make a man leave everything he owns and flee?"

Perhaps the most serious problem the refugees present to Uganda is security. Independence for Ruanda has only served to increase the security risks involved in having a large number of disaffected refugees near the border. Special police force units as well as a company of the King's African Rifles are now guarding the border and trying to prevent attacks either way.

This has been neither easy nor effective. Over the past few weeks it has become quite evident that the refugee camps are being used as recruiting grounds for an organization called Inyenzi which means Cockroach. They have launched numerous raids across the border in which a good number of people have been killed. The Uganda Government strongly disapproves of Inyenzi and is making every effort to unearth its members. It is an efficient underground organization, however, and this has proved singularly difficult.

An official statement on the Inyenzi said: "This group, elements of which are believed to exist in Uganda, is comprised of people of the Tutsi tribe of Ruanda. The object of the secret organization is to launch a counter-revolution to overthrow the present established government in Ruanda."

A number of the younger refugees periodically disappear, no doubt to join Inyenzi. Not only does this leave numerous families in Uganda without male support, but the greater this type of provocation, the greater the chances the Ruanda Government will react by harassing the 150,000 Batutsi still living in Ruanda and cause a fresh movement of refugees into Uganda. On the other hand if In-

yenzi by a quirk of fate is successful and does manage to overthrow the Ruanda Government, then the position will be reversed and thousands of republican refugees will flock to Uganda.

Now that the border camps are virtually empty and most refugees have been moved to Ankole, the situation will no doubt improve. Meanwhile tempers on both sides are becoming a bit frayed.

Not so long ago Government asked Ankole to set aside further land in the north in case there was another influx of refugees. At first Ankole agreed, but recently it reversed its decision and the land is no longer available. This is strange behavior for a district which has previously welcomed new immigrants, and from what I can gather it is attributable entirely to the political struggle between Catholics and Protestants.

The large question at the moment is whether the refugees will want to stay in Uganda or return to Ruanda. No one really has the foggiest idea. To a man the refugees say they want to return, but there are also several reasons why they may eventually decide to remain. For many years people have come from overcrowded Ruanda to find work in Uganda, especially in Buganda. It is now estimated that a large percentage of Buganda's population comes from Ruanda. Most come for temporary employment but in fact many remain and settle down. Free land and relative security will no doubt persuade a number of refugees to do the same.

Another indication is that a number of families have changed their attitude toward collective ownership of land at Oruchinga and have asked for their own plots. This certainly suggests they plan to stay for a while. The fellow running Lake Nakavali told us that many had become quite resigned to living there.

Regardless, Government is assuming they will remain. The Ministry of Education and various missions have established schools at Oruchinga, and there are now between 2,000 and 2,500 children attending regularly. The lone Red Cross nurse is about to be joined by another who will remain at the Lake Nakavali Cattle Resettlement Area indefinitely.

It looks as if they'll be around for quite some time.

Sincerely yours,



Ian Michael Wright

