

## Rwanda

### President on Talks With Rebels, Reconciliation

BR0705113893 Brussels LE SOIR in French 30 Apr 93

p 4

[Interview with Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana by Colette Braeckman in Kigali; date not given: "On Rwanda's Future and Talks With Rebels"]

[Text] [Braeckman] As president of Rwanda, are you satisfied with the progress made in the talks in Arusha between representatives of the Rwandan Government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (FPR)? In view of the offensive launched by the Patriotic Front on 8 February, do you believe that the proposed guarantees will be sufficient?

[Habyarimana] The Arusha talks are largely a question of mutual trust and goodwill. However, I believe that the principal guarantee must be international: We attach great importance to the presence of observers—including Belgians—and we have sought through an appeal to the United Nations to involve the international community in a clearer, more visible manner. That is why we invited the UN secretary general to send a representative to Arusha. Of course, there was the 8 February attack, which both surprised and disappointed us. The FPR said that this offensive was a response to the events that had taken place in Kibuye, Gisenyi, and Ruhengeri. However, these excesses had occurred at the end of January. It surely is inconceivable that an attack on the scale of the 8 February offensive could be decided and organized in just a few days. In reality, preparations for the FPR attack had been under way since November or December.

[Braeckman] Do you want to see foreign troops on the border between Rwanda and Uganda?

[Habyarimana] We have asked the United Nations to monitor the border, and Uganda has submitted the same request to the UN Security Council. Since this request has been made by two sovereign countries, it will not pose any particular problems. On the Ugandan side, some foreign observers already are monitoring the border.

[Braeckman] Who will monitor the buffer zone from which the civil population has fled?

**[Habyarimana]** An agreement signed between the Rwandan prime minister and the FPR chairman stipulates that security in the buffer zone should be guaranteed by international troops. We wanted UN troops, but the FPR prefers to trust the OAU. Perhaps we can find a compromise and add international experts to the OAU troops. To be honest, it seems to me that in the event of a conflict the UN troops would be more experienced than those of the OAU. We are going to try and find a compromise between the two positions.

**[Braeckman]** Recently, as borne out by the sudden recall of the Belgian ambassador in Kigali, Belgium shunned Rwanda. Is the current visit by Michel Lebrun, Belgian minister of the French-speaking Community, a positive sign?

**[Habyarimana]** I was not aware that the Belgians were shunning us. Furthermore, I do not see why they should. I hope that if this was the case, it is no longer, and that the whole affair was a misunderstanding. The government and people of Rwanda appreciate the visit by Minister Lebrun, which bears witness to our good relations and the degree of warmth in the contacts between our two countries. And I would like to take this opportunity to salute the tangible achievements of Belgians cooperating in Rwanda.

**[Braeckman]** What is your reaction to the report on human rights violations in Rwanda, which have been the subject of extensive discussion in Belgium?

**[Habyarimana]** My impression is that this report is imbalanced with regard to the responsibilities incumbent upon the Rwandan authorities and those of the FPR—all the more so since the document was issued after the offensive by the Patriotic Front when the extent of their abuses was known. The initial response to this report by both the Rwandan Government and myself was to state certain reservations concerning the assertions which seemed to us gratuitous and based on dubious eyewitness accounts. Afterwards, we did admit, however, that some incidents had occurred in the north of the country and in other regions. These were due to the war and to the population's surprise at the offensive. They were also due to the multiparty system, with confrontations taking place between members of different political parties on some occasions. We have admitted all that. Moreover, measures have been taken and we have pledged to improve the situation with the help of the countries aiding us.

**[Braeckman]** Will the demobilization of more than 30,000 troops pose a problem? There are so many arms in Rwanda.

**[Habyarimana]** The uncontrolled, widespread distribution of arms in the country poses a very serious problem indeed. It creates insecurity and encourages banditry. The demobilization is threatening to aggravate the problem, which is why we want it to be planned, so that the soldiers returning to civil life are not sent straight back to the hills. I would like them to pass through

apprentice workshops at secondary schools. This training would constitute a transitional period for these soldiers. The ex-soldier must forget what a gun or grenade is.

[Braeckman] Will Rwanda succeed in emerging from this difficult phase without incurring too much damage?

[Habyarimana] We hope so, because the people are hoping to regain some stability. It is easy to criticize what we have done since 1973, but there are many positive aspects, especially this climate of stability. We have tried to create unity, the feeling of belonging to one and the same nation. The war destroyed all that and now we have to try and reshape such unity and make national reconciliation succeed. Luckily, we are not alone: The visits and suggestions that we are receiving are interpreted as indications of friendliness, which reinforce our own efforts.