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UNAMIR - MINUAR

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During introductions in his office, the Major made comments to the effect that Mr. Diallo was viewed as "the man writing bad things about the Government". He produced copies of some press releases he disagreed with, saying he had intended to contact Mr. Diallo to express his disapproval.

It was explained to him that the purpose of the visit was to initiate personal contacts aimed at improving mutual understanding for better relations between UNAMIR and Rwanda Government officials. The approach chosen was meant to minimise officialdom and harmonise views in an informal atmosphere between brothers who are dedicated to work for Rwanda's good image, which is essential for attracting aid.

For the first 15 minutes of our talk, Major Rutayisire spoke in a combative mood, laying all the blame on UNAMIR for failing to appreciate the predicament faced by the Government. In his initial reaction, Major Rutayisire identified two problems of a practical nature: lack of steady interaction between Government officials and UNAMIR officials and lack of tangible benefits accruing from UNAMIR's presence. On the first point, he observed that interaction on a daily basis would help pre-empt any misunderstandings and avert any threat of a crisis. On the second point, he indicated that UNAMIR's work is little known locally, which leads the public to consider the Mission as an employment agency for over-paid domineering foreigners with no use for the country. But as we explained more, stressing the fact that the Government cannot benefit from its current confrontational approach to diplomatic matters, he started to see our point. He became very attentive and, taking a pen and paper, asked what can be done to help correct the apparent misperceptions on both sides.

At this stage, we felt it would not be proper to rush to proposals. We had not come to lecture to him. Our aim was to break the ice and prepare the ground for more discussions in future. So we suggested to the Major that we give it some time for enough reflection and meet again ready with some practical proposals from both sides. He was so receptive that he requested to have the next meeting within only four days, by Monday, May 8 at 9.30 a.m.

He further suggested that we try to meet other influential senior officials and singled out the following for personal contacts: Vice-President and Defence Minister, Major General Paul Kagame, RPF Vice-President and Youth Minister Patrick Mazimhaka, Health Minister, Col. Karemera, RPA Chief Political Commissar, Col. Frank Mugambage and Rehabilitation Directeur de Cabinet, Miss Christine Umutoni. Major Rutayisire thanked Mr. Ssali for this initiative and expressed the hope that the working relations between the two parties would work towards improving the existing relationship.

For the Monday meeting, we expect the Major to give practical suggestions on what can be done for better relations between the Government and the Mission. On our part, we shall stress the necessity for the ORINFOR Chief to stop anti-UNAMIR campaign on Radio and in INVAHO and improve the Mission's image among the population.

MEETING WITH THE PREMIER:

On that same Thursday, the Prime Minister of Rwanda, Mr. Faustin Twagiramungu, invited both of us to his house for an evening with him. Like in the previous case, the invitation came as a result of preliminary contacts made by Mr. Shaka Ssali. The Prime Minister sent a car to collect us from Méridien at 7.30 p.m. That was done because we deemed it inappropriate to use a UNAMIR vehicle.

During the long discussion, which ended at midnight shortly after a late dinner, the atmosphere was informal and marked by openness and friendliness. We explained to the Prime Minister, as we had done in Kampala, a few weeks back, and at ORINFOR a few hours earlier, that our move was more personal than official. We stressed that it was inspired by our concern over the deteriorating relationship between the Rwanda government, UNAMIR and the international community. We further stressed to him that such a confrontational stance against the international community could lead to isolation.

The Prime Minister indicated he was one of those Government officials who support the continued presence of UNAMIR and the renewal of its mandate. He cited some reasons in support of that renewal:

- a: The majority of Rwandese want UNAMIR to stay, because it contributes to their sense of security throughout the country.
- b: The dollar inflows for UNAMIR personnel are propping up the Rwandese franc, which, without them, would see its rate fall to about 1000 fr. per dollar.

The Premier stressed, however, that certain hardline decision-makers are opposed to the retention of UNAMIR in the country and could only accept the mandate renewal as a last resort. For example, this group has demanded a substantial reduction of UNAMIR troops.

For those decision-makers, the stand can be summed up thus: "We won a military victory and conquered State power. But now we are being frustrated with our victory by the massive presence of a military force with greater means and excessive autonomy on our territory. This gives the feeling that we are sort of a UN Trusteeship".

Mr. Twagiramungu further pointed out that in power circles, there are three tendencies with regard to the UNAMIR mandate:

- a: Leaders who want the mandate to be renewed and even strengthened: these are a minority;

- b: Leaders who want UNAMIR to stay, with a revised mandate and reduced personnel, but at the same time with increased efficiency. This group is well represented.
- c: Leaders who simply say that UNAMIR must leave. The group is not numerically strong, but it wields enormous power.

The Premier stated without ambiguity that he is in the second group. He hopes that his point of view will eventually prevail. But he added that he faces an uphill task given the great influence enjoyed by the powerful minority opposed to the renewal of UNAMIR's mandate.

Mr. Twagiramungu further stated that in reality Rwanda has two "governments" running concurrently: one military, the other civilian. He said the country was being run by the military high command. And the civilians who are part of the government were merely implementing decisions taken by the RPA.

On the question of what can be done to help improve relations between UNAMIR and the Government, he suggested, that we should meet the following: Vice-President/Defence Minister, Major General Paul Kagame, Health Minister, Col. Karemera, Youth Minister and RPF Vice-President Patrick Mazimhaka and RPA Chief Political Commissar, Col. Frank Mugambage. He however cautioned us to expect stiff resistance from the above officials.

The Prime Minister also recommended strongly that contacts be made with some external leaders who wield influence over the RPF leadership. He specifically singled out Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and President John Jerry Rawlings of Ghana.

Finally, Mr. Twagiramungu revealed to us off the record that the Cabinet had already decided to renew UNAMIR's mandate. But he said that the hardliners had stated that "they agree but do not accept" - meaning that if they had their way, the mandate would not be extended.

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MONDAY MEETING AT ORINFOR:

As agreed during the Thursday meeting with Major Wilson Rutayisire, Director General of the Rwanda Information Office [ORINFOR], a follow-up meeting took place on Monday, May 8, at 9.30 a.m.

Our conversation started with questions regarding the weekend carjack of UNAMIR vehicles. Major Rutayisire told us he was unaware of the incident and he immediately called the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Gendarmerie, Col. Nyamwasa Kayumba, who promised to ring back after checking the facts. After about 15 minutes, Col. Kayumba called back Major Rutayisire confirming our information and promising to follow up the matter.

This led the Major to stress the need for setting up a coordination team between UNAMIR and the Government to prevent or quickly clear such misunderstandings before matters go too far. Throughout our discussion, he kept coming back to the need for a coordination team and promising to convince his colleagues and superiors about the necessity to set it up. He pointed out that had such a team existed, the weekend incident would have been dealt with, within an hour, through direct contacts. That sort of mechanism could help in circumventing the usual bureaucracy.

Our talk centered on the necessity to improve relations between the Government and UNAMIR. Major Rutayisire showed he was indeed committed to working for the achievement of that goal. He advised us once more to approach the influential decision makers cited during the Thursday discussion, in order to facilitate closer ties.

The Major said he was happy about our two meetings, adding that our discussions could help bridge the communication gap that has been apparent between the Government and UNAMIR at this kind of level. Recalling the intervention he had made to the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Gendarmerie over the carjack of UNAMIR vehicles, Major Rutayisire stressed once again the necessity for a coordination team to liaise between the Government and UNAMIR. He said he would take the initiative to call us back if any problem should arise, especially with regards to information related matters.

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