

Bodies in the Lake

Friday, Jan. 24, 1964

"A new situation seems to have developed in Rwanda," a spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross declared in Geneva last week. Indeed it had. In the onetime Belgian colony, a tribal massacre little short of genocide was under way. By conservative estimate, 6,000 Watutsi men, women and children have already been slaughtered or tortured to death by hordes of Bahutu warriors.

For centuries the giant (average height: 6 ft. 6 in.), Watutsi ruled the more primitive native Bahutu as their slaves. The tables were turned in 1960 when the Belgians staged an election in which the 1,500,000 Bahutu wrenched control from their longtime feudal masters, who numbered only about 250,000. The Bahutu wreaked a savage reprisal; after Rwanda won its independence in July 1962, some 86,000 Watutsi streamed into neighboring Tanganyika, Uganda, Burundi and the Congo's Kivu Province.

But the Watutsi tribesmen vowed revenge. Bands of night-time raiders called *inyenzi* ("cockroaches") began attacking Bahutu villages. The week before Christmas, thousands of Watutsi refugees suddenly invaded Rwanda from three countries. Although they advanced to within a few miles of the Rwanda capital, Kigali, the Watutsi were finally repulsed in a bloody battle.

At that, the Bahutu set about exterminating their enemies once and for all. Even Watutsi families who never left the country were massacred. Children were impaled, the forearms of Watutsi men were cut off, and the men sent into the jungle to die. Hundreds more were tossed into the Ruzizi River, which carried maimed bodies 125 miles until they bobbed up in Lake Tanganyika.