

Minority Group Faces Extinction in Africa

By DENNIS NEELD

KIGALE, Rwanda (AP)—The towering Watusis of Rwanda face the threat of extermination by Bahutu tribesmen, who for centuries were their slaves.

The stocky Bahutus are half the size of the Watusis — many of whom stand 7 feet tall — 10 times their number.

Thousands of Watusis were driven out of Rwanda by a Bahutu revolt four years ago. Now fanatical Watusi warriors — called by enemies *inyenzi*, or cockroaches — are raiding the frontier in a desperate bid to retake the country from its new rulers.

Their attacks touched off a massacre of Watusi families remaining in Rwanda. It may never be known how many people died in the Bahutu reprisals. Missionaries here estimate the number between 10,000 and 20,000.

By missionaries' accounts: Backed by Rwanda's Belgian-officered army of some 1,200 men, Bahutus drove truckloads of Watusi men, women and children into the bush, made them dig their own graves, then shot them.

One Watusi priest was dragged from his church during a Christmas Day service and hacked to pieces. His bloodstained robes were tossed among the congregation. Then his wife and children were seized. Their heads were tied to their knees and they were thrown in the river to drown.

The servant of a British missionary saw her father, brother, and bridegroom, a teacher slaughtered on her wedding day. She was raped.

A truck driver told how he had been forced to take 20 Watusis into the bush for execution. One, he said, conducted a last service for the victims and they were shot as they knelt to pray.

Missionaries who tell of the carnage refuse to permit their names to be published for fear of reprisals against African members of their congregations.

Rwanda's prisons are reported jammed with Watusis.

Several churchmen here accuse President Gregoire Kayibanda's government of using the Watusi raids as an excuse for genocide.

"You have a republican regime here based on racialism," said one. "They know they are not strong and they are afraid. They look on every Watusi as a potential enemy."

"Many of these Watusis are educated and cultured people and the educated ones have suffered most. It seems the Bahutus are trying to eliminate every potential Watusi leader."

Bahutu fear and hatred of the Watusis goes back a long way. The Watusis, brown-skinned aristocrats said by some to be descended from Egypt's pharaohs, conquered the Bahutu—a pure-blooded Negro tribe—five centuries ago and became the masters, often being carried about on litters by Bahutu slaves, who did all the work on farms.

The Watusis, who wore spotless white togas, refused to work at all. Even so they were formidable athletes and there are written records to show that some, running and jumping from a foot-high mound, could clear heights over eight feet.

Churchmen here would like to see some form of international intervention enabling surviving Watusis in Rwanda to leave the country.

Rwanda government officials acknowledge privately that many Watusis have been killed but declare that if Watusi attacks from outside the country ceased there would be no more trouble.

A United Nations official here apparently agreed with this view.

"This is the whole crux of the matter," he said. "Before these attacks began there was peace here; there were even Watusi members of the government. But as long as the attacks continue or, there is a danger of attack the people in Rwanda are going to suffer."

Watusi attacks are planned in refugee camps sometimes 65 miles from the frontier. Western diplomats believe extremist agitators are at work whipping up the hatred of the Watusis for the Bahutu rulers.

Mwaigiri V, exiled king of the Watusis, has visited Peking and some people express belief he has received money for arms from the Communists.