

Queenstown

Mr Roly Kingwill Sees a Nation Born

Independence of Burundi

The following interesting extract is an eye-witness account by Mr. Roly Kingwill, well-known farmer of Graaff-Reinet district, of the recent independence celebrations of Burundi. Mr. Kingwill, who is at present in the Congo, was with the International Moral Re-Armament Force in Burundi at the time and was specially invited to attend the celebrations.

On the first of July, 1962, Burundi, the small mountainous agricultural country in the heart of Africa, celebrated its independence with rich ritual in the church, with massive parades and great rejoicing among the people.

It has been an indescribable day, writes Mr. Kingwill. We were officially invited and seated at the functions at the church this morning, for the parades and speeches at the stadium and then for the official lunch.

BEAUTY OF AFRICA

At the stadium I looked across the vast crowds to the hills with banana plantations on the lower slopes, with the houses of the hill farmers higher up and in the background high grass covered mountains. A marvellous picture of beauty and of life in Africa. Behind me was the roomy, orderly town of Usumbura and beyond it Lake Tanganyika.

A good deal of the time I watched proceedings over the shoulder of a steel helmeted, camouflage-painted, disciplined African paratrooper who presented arms or stood at ease with his bayoneted rifle as ordered from time to time.

THE KING ARRIVES

The whole amphitheatre was ringed with paratroopers while in the middle, infantry were drawn up for inspection by the King, who arrived a little later than expected, but resplendent in his white uniform with blue sash.

The king was greeted with shouts and cheers and singing and the most magnificent drumming! Twenty-five tall men with blue tunics over white flowing robes beat drums made of hollowed out logs in magnificent, spectacular movement at a speed to be seen to be believed.

At a given signal the Belgian National Anthem was played, the Belgian flag was lowered and the green and red and white cross Burundi flag was raised.

21-GUN SALUTE

The Belgian Governor spoke with generosity and the King and Prime Minister of Burundi replied and emphasised the aims of the new nation of responsibility, peace and cooperation with everyone.

A 21-gun salute was fired.

The soldiers formed into columns and marched around the stadium and back to their camp. They were followed by the organised youth party in coloured dress marching to their own band, then the equivalent of boy scouts, girl guides and brownies, in uniform, marching in step, saluting their country and signifying their determination to live for their nation.

As they marched in their hundreds I thought: "All Africa is marching forward on eager feet. If that march is to be with discipline and in charity and cooperation depends much if we in South Africa live with discipline, in charity and with cooperation."

Our destiny, our opportunities are so much greater than we realise.