

Strike called off in Burundi, parties agree on candidate for PM

AFP, February 20, 1995

BUJUMBURA, Feb 20 (AFP) - The Tutsi-dominated opposition Monday called off a strike that paralysed Burundi and threatened to plunge the country into renewed inter-ethnic warfare following an agreement on a candidate to succeed the prime minister.

Under the agreement, reached following lengthy negotiations between opposition parties, Antoine Nduwayo would succeed Prime Minister Anatole Kanyenkiko, a moderate Hutu who heads a coalition government formed late last year to stave off mass violence.

Nduwayo, 52, an economist and former executive secretary of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries which groups Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire, like Kanyenkiko is a member of the former sole ruling party Union for National Progress (UPRONA).

His nomination was imposed on UPRONA by the seven other small

opposition parties.

UPRONA, the main opposition party, had proposed Aster Girukwigomba, former commerce minister and economic advisor to ex-president Pierre Buyoya.

Nduwayo's nomination, greeted with a sigh of relief by Burundians who feared the strike would lead to a bloodbath between the country's Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups, must still be approved by Hutu President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya.

Kanyenkiko asked the Hutu president to start looking for someone to replace him last Thursday after the strike spread to most parts of the central African country.

Kanyenkiko, himself from Burundi's Hutu majority, took office as a member of the Tutsi-led UPRONA, but is now considered by the party as being a pawn of the Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU), the party of the Hutu majority.

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