

Act 2, scene 1: Badila and the President's counsellors debate their course of action after receiving Babela's letter

BADILA (she adjusts her head-scarf): Your Excellency Mr. President, Head of State, the honourable counsellors, Great Men of the State, one must understand that even “light rains spoil great roads.” And NZENGUELE NZENGUELE KA BUTI KA TIO BUTI...How to make sense of all this! Let's go back to that letter addressed to the Head of State, His Excellency the President. Respected counsellors, the hour is grave...The President it seems is now considered as nothing more than a train inspector, a man with no extraordinary powers. Our critics think politics is a game everyone can play. I say, no! And even then it is both an active and passive game: we help those who help us. Does the Head of State, the Great Man of our Republic, care about the death of an elderly person, the sprain of a spine or the fracture of a bone? When one accepts a job, any kind of job, one must endure the incidents and accidents – in short, the consequences – which might ensue. Do not be seduced by the odious words of this letter, honourable counsellors. This is an attempt at organising a rebellion. Gentlemen, we must precede the enemy, that great bandit BABELA, whose mother was sacrificed because of greediness, adultery and stealing, and who wants to use political means to reach his goal: to conquer the power of His Excellency the President BATELA. As a woman and the first advisor of both the President and the council, I will ruthlessly fight all those who try and intimidate us or attempt to organise a coup, or any other odious action. Our law, in force since we came to power, bans coups. Violations of the law can only come from the head of State alone. Our tribunal will judge and condemn to death crooks, bandits and others. Nopity will be shown or pardon given, whatever the sex, age, or family ties. Your Excellency the President, honourable counsellors, the law is made to be applied and not caressed and cast aside. We must behave like lions, to have the reputation of being untouchable and strong. Robbers and rebels must suffer the fate they have called down on themselves.

BATELA: I am delighted, honourable BADILA. Our views are the same. But now we represent a tribunal in which everyone has to be heard, whatever the feelings of each of our honourable counsellors.

The First Counsellor: Your Excellency the President, the hour is grave, as the first advisor, the honourable BADILA, has just been saying. But no mountain is more insurmountable than an idea, believe me...To define the real State, to call for the unity of a political body, is also to meditate on community and human life. The law has existed since the creation of this world. It was given to us by our ancestors, and it remains efficient to this day: one must kill, bury people alive, burn them, practice the law of Moses. Some things can't be tolerated by the State. Running a state is not like administering a supermarket or a school. On the other hand, the state is a living society in which dialogue will never cease, in which inhabitants of all ages and sexes will never stop thinking. Your Excellency Mr. President, it is in this atmosphere that you must rule. As to the letter, President, you must show wisdom. There have been deaths and serious incidents. Power, Your Excellency, sometimes means putting oneself in the place of the people, of the citizen who suffers, of the man who screams and explodes from what he

sees, the woman who thinks and feels in her heart. The letter has its reasons, so do try and understand, Your Excellency, that death does not add status to the living. I have spoken.