
Africa

Colonel Qaddafi's 'Operation Chad'

by Mary Lalevée

Colonel Muammar Qaddafi's visits to the African nations of Ruanda, Burundi, and Sudan May 17-19 are just the latest in a series of moves by the Libyans to improve their position in Africa south of the Sahara. Libyan support for anti-government rebels in Chad and Sudan, and for Islamic fundamentalists, particularly in west Africa, had meant that many African governments had carefully kept the Libyan dictator at arm's length.

However, starting in November 1984, the Libyans have launched an "operation charm" to woo Africa.

November 1984: Niger and Libya began normalizing relations, which had been frozen since January 1981. A Libyan chargé d'affaires was installed in Niamey, and the embassy's premises reopened. The Niger authorities had expelled all the Libyan diplomats on Jan. 13, 1981, accusing them of turning the embassy into a "peoples' bureau" and of "conducting activities incompatible with their status."

December 1984: Libya's Foreign Minister Treiki visited Niger, Bourkina Faso, Gambia, and Senegal. In Senegal, he discussed the restoration of diplomatic relations. Gambia and Libya resumed diplomatic relations on Dec. 19, broken off by Gambia in 1980. Treiki said in Senegal that he was there to look for ways of relaunching cooperation between the two countries in all areas, and that Libya was willing to renew diplomatic relations.

January 1985: A meeting took place in Ouagadougou, Bourkina Faso, of the foreign ministers of Libya, Bourkina Faso, Benin, and Ghana. The aim of the meeting was to develop the relations among the four countries, but reports speak of "bitter complaints" from Libya's partners about the inadequate amount of economic aid from Tripoli, "much less than promised," and about "its working methods." Certain participants walked out, preventing a closing ceremony and a final communiqué.

February 1985: The head of a Libyan delegation visiting Togo announced that Libya would sponsor the building of an Islamic center in Lome, at a cost of \$10 million to "sponsor educational, medical and cultural activities."

May 1985: Colonel Qaddafi visited Rwanda, Burundi, and Sudan. In Burundi and Rwanda, joint declarations called

for creating "progressive fronts of countries", against "American imperialism and neo-colonialism." In Sudan, he held a six-hour meeting with head of state General Dahab, and afterwards said at the airport that he was confident that the "Egyptian masses" would overthrow "Israel's ally Mubarak" in the same way they overthrew Numayri, the former Sudanese President. Qaddafi's visit to Sudan came shortly after the creation of the Libyan-financed "Movement of the Sudanese Revolutionary Committees," which follow Qaddafi's *Green Book*.

Qaddafi's wooing of the new Sudanese regime seems to be bringing results: The Sudanese prime minister announced on May 23 the abrogation of agreements between Egypt and the Sudan that had been negotiated by Numayri.

Islamic fundamentalism is on the rise in Africa, with the severe economic crisis affecting Africa providing fertile ground. In Senegal, a major Islamic cultural center, financed jointly by a Senegalese Association, the Union for Islamic Progress of Senegal, Algeria, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia was inaugurated by President Abdou Diouf on March 20.

There are reports that the largest Muslim Brotherhood in Senegal, the Mourides, are increasingly restive in the face of the implementation of IMF-austerity measures. The fact that President Diouf is a member of the Tidjane Brotherhood reportedly exacerbates tension. Senegal's ground nut farmers are largely controlled by the Mouride Brotherhood, and they have been increasingly withholding their crops from the state-run purchasing system, either smuggling the product out of the country, or processing it themselves into oil, which they sell directly to the consumers. Of the estimated 1984 crop of 700,000 tons, only 150,000 tons were sold through official networks.

Diouf is reported to be encouraging Islamic intellectuals who oppose the "non-Islamic" beliefs of the brotherhoods. There is an active pro-Iranian movement, with two publications, *Djamra* and *Wal Fadri*, which attack the Senegalese government consistently. Their editor, Sidi Lamine Niassé, is the brother of the "Ayatollah of Kaoloack." Radical Shi'ite ideology is promoted by the religious leader of the powerful Lebanese community, Cheikh Zein Mohsen.

In Tanzania, where 70% of the population is Muslim, the Iranian Minister of Tourism visited Dar es Salaam on May 21, and announced plans for large numbers of Iranian "tourists" to visit Tanzania. Many of these tourists will be actively promoting fundamentalism, and almost certainly opposition to Tanzanian President Nyerere (who is Catholic).

The May 1985 issue of the magazine *Arabia, the Islamic World Review* carried a long feature on Tanzania, attacking the Tanzanian government for suppressing Muslim schools, for abolishing Islamic law, and recognizing monogamous marriages only. The article goes on, "It is clear that the leftists in command of the affairs of this country are intent on severing the young from their cultural traditions and religious values. Materialism and Marxist thought is propounded in all the colleges. . . . Sad to say, it is Islam which suffers. . . ."