

'Rice War' coalition against Sudan crumbles

by Linda de Hoyos

Former Sudanese President Jaafar Nimeiri returned to Sudan on May 22 after 14 years in exile in Cairo, Egypt, and called for a dialogue toward peace and reconciliation in Sudan, where war in the south has been raging for 16 years. In explaining his return, Nimeiri said, "The government has given political pluralism a chance by passing the Political Association Law. This has encouraged me as it shows the government is serious about handing power over to the people. I have not returned to power, but to my home to participate with my brothers who have chosen me as head of the Coalition of Working People's Forces in the practice of real democracy, and the peaceful rotation of power."

Referring to the war in the south, Nimeiri continued, "We will work with the faithful to stop bloodshed in the country." Two days later, he spoke at the rally to launch his National Working Alliance of Forces Party, and declared, "From inside the country, we are appealing to all Sudanese national forces to engage in a constructive national dialogue that will culminate in a Sudanese peace accord, with a set of guiding principles to be observed by all." Among the leaders of Sudan that Nimeiri met with upon his return was Dr. Riak Machar, President of the Southern Sudan Coordinating Council. "We hope that the rapprochement between the Sudan government and the northern opposition parties increases the process of pluralism and democracy that has been started in the country, and that it would consolidate it," Dr. Machar told *EIR*.

Nimeiri's return is but the most dramatic of a number of events that have taken place in the last two weeks, all of which are leading to reconciliation among the Sudan government and the opposing parties of northern Sudan which were previously arrayed in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Further, Nimeiri's return from Egypt signals the success of diplomatic efforts by the Sudan government and others to bring about normalization of relations between Sudan and its neighbors, including Egypt, Uganda, and Eritrea.

Combined, these two parallel processes toward reconciliation have stamped the seal of doom on the erstwhile alliance that had been put together by British intelligence and its sidekicks in the U.S. Department of State, like Assistant Secretary of State Susan Rice, for the purposes of "bringing down the Khartoum government." The National Democratic Alliance had been cobbled together by its patroness Baroness Caroline

Cox, Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords and leading spokesman of Christian Solidarity International, in order to bring the northern opposition parties, centered around Democratic Union Party leader Mohamed Osman al-Mirghani and Ummah Party leader Sadiq al-Mahdi, together with southern rebel leader John Garang, chairman of the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA). This coalition, which originally had backing from Eritrea, Egypt, and Uganda, and even briefly from Ethiopia, now appears to have bit the dust.

The one recalcitrant remains John Garang, who has refused to sign the April 1997 peace charter which was signed by most of other armed faction leaders of southern Sudan. Garang, politically nurtured by Cox et al., is in the "business" of war; receiving upwards of \$75 million from the U.S. Agency for International Development for setting up "civil administration" in areas of the south under his control, or under his control after armed attack.

Renewed relations with neighbors

In the past month, diplomacy from Sudan and others to re-establish normal relations between Sudan and its neighbors has moved at a breathtaking speed. In all cases, one of the key interlocutors has been Libyan President Muammar Qaddafi, who has encouraged all sides to meet and initiate dialogue. According to Libyan television, Qaddafi has carried out his efforts "to reconcile the Sudanese government and different opposition parties to prevent Sudan from becoming a new Somalia"—precisely the scenario that would result if British-State Department war-mongers were to prevail in the region.

- On May 2, Sudan and Eritrea signed an agreement to end the state of hostilities between them. Relations had been broken since December 1994, and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki in 1995 had handed over the Sudan Embassy in the capital, Asmara, to the NDA, as Eritrea became a base for military operations against Sudan, in close working alliance with Israel. However, the Eritrean invasion of Ethiopia in May 1998 and Eritrea's subsequent motion toward Qaddafi's Libya, has had the perhaps inadvertent result of permitting the re-opening of a dialogue with Sudan. The dialogue between the two countries has been mediated by Qatar, reportedly with strong encouragement from Libya, where the Eri-

trean and Sudanese Presidents had met in April in a meeting with Qaddafi. After the signing of the preliminary agreement on May 2, it was reported that a Sudan security delegation went to Asmara to work out the precise modalities for renewed relations, according to Sudan Foreign Affairs Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail in a press conference May 19. In addition, BBC reported that Eritrea has agreed to hand the Sudan embassy in Asmara back to the Sudan government. The foreign ministers of Sudan, Eritrea, and Libya are to meet next month for further discussions. The minister also said that Sudan wants to normalize its relations with Uganda. "Commenting on statements by some Ugandan officials, Ismail pointed out that the Sudan is ready to normalize its relations with Uganda, adding that what is required is to translate these statements into reality."

- On May 23, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa told reporters that his meeting with visiting Sudanese Foreign Affairs Minister Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail had resulted in "progress without doubt in our contacts and relations with Sudan. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak gives the highest importance to Sudan which tops the list of interests for Egyptian diplomacy." Sudan President Omer al-Bashir told the nation on state television that relations with Egypt were improving at a "remarkable rate."

According to Agence France Presse, the two countries are

set to sign a security agreement in June, by which neither government would harbor anyone wanted by the other on a security matter. Egypt, however, would not have to cease being a refuge for Sudanese opposition groups. The accord would also call upon Egypt to look to mediate a reconciliation between Sudan's government and the southern opposition.

While the Sudanese Foreign Minister was in Cairo, an Egyptian delegation was in Sudan taking possession of several buildings owned by the Egyptian government that had been confiscated by the Sudan government in 1992.

- By the end of May, Sudanese Foreign Affairs Minister Mustafa will further visit Algeria, to begin the normalization of relations with that country, which were partially ruptured in 1993.

The process of reconciliation within Sudan had begun with talks in Geneva early this month between Speaker of the National Assembly Hassan al-Turabi and former President Sadiq al-Mahdi, to establish modalities by which al-Mahdi would also return to the country. On May 27, Mohamed Othman al-Mirghani, leader of the Democratic Union Party which has close ties to Egypt, met with Libya's Qaddafi in Sirte, Libya, along with Egyptian Foreign Minister Moussa, a meeting believed to be a prelude to talks between representatives of the Sudan government and al-Mirghani later in the coming days.

War in the south

It can only be hoped that the unity of the north in a commitment to peaceful dialogue and "rotation of power" through democracy, as Nimeiri phrased it, will lead to a far greater mandate to end the war in the south, which has caused such terrible suffering to all the Sudanese people. Despite a cease-fire agreement, Garang's SPLA continues its war in the south against the Sudan government and the southern forces that had signed the April 1997 peace charter. In the last two months, Garang warned that the SPLA would make all efforts to destroy the capacity of Sudan to export oil, which it will begin doing from Unity state through a pipeline to Port Sudan in June. On May 2, as Garang's forces attacked government-held territory, the Sudan government troops moved to secure the oilfields, and has taken preemptive action to ensure the flow of the oil.

However, according to the peace charter, the Unity state is under the military jurisdiction of the Southern Sudan Defense Forces, under the command of the Southern Sudan Coordinating Council. According to the charter, a joint command between the SSDF and the government forces was to be established, but this has been delayed. "There has been a campaign in the international press," said Riak Machar, to put forward the idea that the SSDF are "rebels," and make it appear as if the peace charter was being ripped up. "There was fighting between two forces who had been friendly, so how do you call them rebels?" He said that there was a commitment on the part of the Southern Council and the government to re-

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solve this problem peacefully. “This commitment to a peaceful solution is very important,” he said. “We have done so much for the peace process. We have moved so far in Sudan in creating a constitution, in establishing pluralism, that we cannot say that the peace process has failed. Even the violations [of the peace charter] we are complaining of, are because of the war. If there were no war, no one would attempt to violate the agreement.”

Anti-Sudan policy in ruins

It is no exaggeration to say that the policy rammed through the State Department in 1997 for a full-court press against Sudan, put forward by Roger Winter of the U.S. Committee for Refugees, John Prendergast, then of the National Security Council, and enforced through Susan Rice, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, is a total shambles. That policy built the “alliance” against Sudan of the northern opposition parties, the SPLA, along with Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Uganda for a military war against Sudan. Militarily, this policy has accomplished absolutely nothing, but it has cost the lives of up to hundreds of thousands of civilians destroyed by the famine and disease caused by the war. Calls are now beginning to be heard for an end to the insane policy of war and destabilization toward Sudan.

The case was put most bluntly in a *Wall Street Journal* commentary by Milt Bearden, who had been CIA station chief in Sudan during the 1980s. Bearden noted that the United States effectively admitted that the Aug. 20, 1998 bombing of the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant was a mistake, when it ordered the frozen assets of the plant’s owner to be freed on May 3. The plant was targeted on the basis of allegations that it had been producing chemical weapons in cahoots with terrorist ideologue Osama Bin Laden, who, in turn, was blamed for the terrorist bombing of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania earlier that month. Noting that soil sampling—which allegedly clinched the evidence of the chemical weapons research at Al-Shifa—“has historically been considered only a small tile of the intelligence mosaic. Does it make sense for the sole remaining superpower to attack a small African nation, without warning, based solely on unconfirmed evidence provided by an agent from a third country?” In reality, Bearden argued, the bombing of Al-Shifa was not a matter of mistaken intelligence, but of mistaken policy. And worse, because of the failure of the United States to admit its mistake, “damage to America’s credibility is far more serious than any possible short-term compromise of intelligence methods. . . .”

“On the positive side, finally settling the Al-Shifa affair might actually get the U.S. re-engaged in Sudan, where its leadership is needed to end the near-biblical suffering in a ravaged region, and in the process move a country that was once a close U.S. ally back into the international community. The Sudanese are ready for that.”

The crimes against peace in The Hague

by Mark Burdman

A British source in a position to know, told *EIR* on June 1, that massive, official British pressure was largely responsible for the May 27 decision by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), to indict Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, and four other Serbian political and military leaders, for war crimes. The British source, who is opposed to the NATO war against Yugoslavia, revealed that British government circles also had pressured the United States, to support the operations of the Hague, Netherlands-based ICTY. “Our government has no interest in negotiating with Milosevic, and this is coming from the lot that is pushing for the ground troops option in Yugoslavia,” the source said.

This assessment confirms widespread suspicions that the ICTY indictments were issued to wreck a diplomatic solution with the Yugoslav/Serbian leadership, at precisely the time that the momentum for such a solution was reaching critical mass. After the indictments were announced, senior officials of all governments that have shown a genuine interest in a negotiated settlement—including those of Italy, Germany, Greece, Russia, and China, as well as United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan—promptly voiced their amazement at the timing of the court ruling.

The Chief Prosecutor for the Tribunal, Louise Arbour of Canada, stated May 28: “We were driven by a now-or-never sense of urgency . . . ensuring that the justice agenda did not get completely bypassed by the peace process. . . . I am mindful of the impact that this indictment may have on the peace process in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. . . .” The indictment has “simply exposed the unsuitability” of Milosevic and the other indicted officials, to be guarantors of any peace deal, she said.

On May 28, the Vienna-based International Progress Organization (IPO) released a statement, authored by its President Dr. Hans Koechler, charging that Arbour’s comments reveal that she “has tried to act as a surrogate politician, and to influence political events in the interest of those NATO countries presently waging war against Yugoslavia.”

A BAC operation

That Milosevic is guilty of war crimes, is nothing new. As amply documented by this publication over the years,