

Africa Report by Linda de Hoyos

Congolese protest annexation

Despite the signing of the Lusaka accords in early August, there is no sign of Ugandan-Rwandan withdrawal.

The Congo government on Oct. 13 announced that the Ugandan and Rwandan forces now occupying the eastern area of the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C.), are sending for troops from Burundi, for a renewed offensive against the government of President Laurent Kabila. The offensive, according to the Nairobi-based Missionary News Agency (Misna), will proceed along three routes: Kasai province, with the diamond depot of Mbuji Mayi as the objective; Katanga province, in the direction of Kamina; and Equator province, where the takeover of Mbandaka would open the river course through to the capital city of Kinshasa.

Sources reporting to Misna have confirmed passage of the "reinforcement troops" from Burundi of various nationalities. Ugandan troops were reported by the UN news agency IRIN to be involved in aiding the Burundian military in rounding up hundreds of thousands of Burundian civilians into concentration camps at the end of September. The Burundian military regime of Pierre Buyoya, a Tutsi force allied with Rwanda and Uganda, has consistently denied reports of its involvement in the Congo, despite eyewitness accounts.

The Congo war involves, on the one side, the Kabila government with its allies from the Southern African Development Community (Namibia, Angola, and Zimbabwe), and on the other, the militaries of Burundi, Uganda, and Rwanda, which invaded eastern Congo in August 1998. Early attempts by the invasion forces to seize Kinshasa were thwarted, but the Ugandan and Rwandan militaries, despite

their own internecine conflicts, have effectively annexed the Kivu provinces of eastern Congo.

This annexation, until recently, has received little attention in the Western press. As *EIR* has reported, however, the people of eastern Congo have been subjected to massacres, rape, murder, and the total pillaging of their personal property, along with the wholesale pilfering of the region's gold and diamonds. Local administrators and chiefs have been replaced by Rwandan- or Ugandan-approved potentates.

In early October, the people of Kisangani, where occupying Ugandan and Rwandan forces exchanged fire with each other for three days in September, protested to the mayor's office about the involvement of Rwandan and Ugandan soldiers in the affairs of the city. Uganda and Rwanda have divided the city into sectors, each dominated by troops from either country. The Kisangani residents called for the immediate implementation of the so-called Lusaka accord, which, they said, means the withdrawal of Ugandan and Rwandan troops from the area, and the dispatch of UN observers to the scene. They demanded an end to the "looting" of Congo's riches by the foreign invaders. The Ugandan annexation has gone so far, that Uganda has carved out two separate provinces from the province of Nord-Kivu under its occupation, calling them Kibali-Ituri and Ruwenzori provinces. The Kisangani protesters demanded an immediate dismantling of this administrative entity and respect for the sovereignty of the Congo.

In Kinshasa, on Oct. 6, a delega-

tion of the tribal leaders from Beni and Lubero in Nord-Kivu province gave further evidence of the occupation to a conference of civic and religious leaders. Elders of the Nende tribe, speaking in the name of the people of the region, attacked all the rebellion factions. They said that all the rebel signers of the Lusaka accords were "military foreigner occupation movements whose aim is the balkanization of the country, the systematic looting of its wealth, and the destruction of its infrastructure." They said that the towns of Beni and Lubero were recently split off to form new provinces for Uganda. They also said that the rival rebel factions had set up border and customs posts along their respective occupied zones. The chiefs demanded the "maintenance of the territories of Beni and Lubero in Nord-Kivu province, and respect for the unity and territorial integrity of the D.R.C."

There are today 1.2 million Congolese who have been displaced by the war. Along the cease-fire line—that is, the front—hundreds of thousands of Congolese have been thrown out of their homes and are scrambling to survive. Reports coming into IRIN say that in the eastern areas of Moba, Kalemie, and Nyuna, a UN donor team found severe economic depression, acute malnutrition, and deserted towns along the cease-fire line. "Local markets have stopped functioning. People who have not fled have lost all their possessions, as well as their means of livelihood."

A sample nutritional screening conducted by two international non-governmental organizations in Baraka in South Kivu reveals "astonishingly high rates of acute and chronic malnutrition. It is not hard to imagine the mortality tagged to such malnutrition rates, knowing especially that the medical stocks are totally depleted and facilities nonexistent."