

East Africa needs peace, economic development, not witchcraft

by Hussein Al-Nadeem

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has been doing her best in Africa and the Middle East to enrage every ally of the United States, and to push policies perpetuating war and chaos, especially in East Africa and against Sudan. Albright's gang in the U.S. State Department, featuring British Empire enthusiast Susan Rice and her "special adviser" John Prendergast, are desperately fanning the embers of the war which was recently lost by the British to the advantage of the unity of the nation of Sudan (see "Britain's Baroness Cox Is Losing the Battle, and the War, Against Sudan," *EIR*, Jan. 30, 1998). This operation is doomed to fail for several reasons. Nonetheless, it will have dire consequences for U.S. foreign policy.

The regional states around Sudan are exhausted, and are no longer economically, logistically, or politically capable of continuing the war against Sudan in support of Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) leader John Garang. The states which played a key role in the invasion of Sudan in 1996—Uganda, Ethiopia, and Eritrea—are facing an economic and political nightmare internally; Ethiopia and Eritrea are engaged in a bloody war which has already claimed tens of thousands of lives. Kenya, which has been a central staging ground for a massive international "humanitarian aid" operation in support of the SPLA, is no longer able to sustain that role, because it is itself in pressing need of help.

The "humanitarian" operation has been exposed for what it is, and governments in Europe are stopping their support for such operations. For example, earlier this year, the Norwegian government refused to renew its funding of the Norwegian People's Aid operations in southern Sudan, one of the most aggressive organizations in the war against Khartoum. Christian Solidarity International—headed by Baroness Caroline Cox, until recently when she split off her own group—has recently been stripped of its non-governmental organization status in the United Nations Economic and Social Council (see p. 41). CSI, it was charged, was encouraging and engaging in slavery, in its zeal to "redeem" slaves for money, as part of its propaganda efforts on behalf of Garang and the SPLA.

Enter Egypt

In her recent tour in Africa, Albright was struck by a new, powerful regional factor: the Egyptian drive for a settlement

in Sudan, whereby all political groups from south and north Sudan are to meet with Khartoum government representatives in Cairo under the auspices of the "Libyan-Egyptian initiative for a comprehensive settlement in Sudan." The result of this meeting would be the establishment of "national reconciliation agreement," binding upon all parties. All the parties, including Garang, have signed the "Tripoli Accord," hosted by Libya.

Egypt, one of the more powerful countries in Africa and the Middle East, and an important ally of the United States, has been positive toward the peace process initiated by the Sudanese government which culminated in the April 1997 Khartoum Charter signed by the government and six southern Sudanese rebel factions—with the exception of the SPLA. The Egyptian government, which had previously attacked Sudan for allegedly harboring the terrorists who had attempted to assassinate President Hosni Mubarak at the Organization of African Unity summit in Ethiopia in 1995, changed its stance following the emergence of strong evidence that Britain, and not Sudan, is the international center for "Islamic terrorism." The massacre of tourists at Luxor, Egypt in November 1997 by the London-based Islamic Group, was the breaking point. Egypt realized that the real danger to stability in the region comes from the British, not Sudan. Normalization of full political, diplomatic, and trade relations with Sudan has been pursued ever since. Moreover, the Egyptian leadership realized that a separate state carved out of Sudan's south would represent a great danger to the security of the Nile headwaters upon which Egypt depends.

When Albright met with Garang in Nairobi, Kenya in Oct. 23, she insisted that the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) is the only forum for a settlement in southern Sudan. In addition to Sudan, IGAD includes current and former enemies of Sudan, such as Uganda, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Kenya. Albright also said that she "does not support other processes that some others are suggesting, the Egyptians and the Libyans."

The first reactions from Sudan and Egypt were "diplomatic," emphasizing that Albright's statement does not reflect a rejection of the Egyptian-Libyan initiative. However, while

Albright was in Africa, Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Othman Ismail held five meetings in Cairo, three with his Egyptian counterpart Amr Moussa, and one each with Egyptian Prime Minister Atef Ebeid and President Mubarak. A summit meeting between Mubarak and Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir was planned for December.

The diplomatic language changed when Ismail, after meeting with Moussa, charged on Oct. 25 that Albright's statements "offering support to the southern rebels and stressing her objection to the Egyptian and Libyan initiative, are part of a plot. . . . They constitute foreign interference in the internal affairs of Sudan which the Sudanese government finds unacceptable." Ismail's remarks were in contrast to his comments two days earlier, when he welcomed any U.S. mediation between his government and Garang's SPLA. "We interpreted Albright's statement in Nairobi as saying that despite U.S. hostility toward Sudan, they're working to mediate between the government and Garang."

Serious statements were later made by Sudanese officials. Speaker of the Parliament Hassan Al-Turabi was quoted that he "does not rule out that the U.S. administration would use force to separate south Sudan, in the same manner as was done in Kosovo and East Timor"—not through the use of direct American or European forces, he said, but through a joint African force with international military and financial backing. "The recent developments, that revealed the rejection by the European and American IGAD partners of the Egyptian-Libyan proposal which supports the territorial unity of Sudan, have made the Egyptian, Libyan, and Sudanese forces within governments and the opposition realize the dangers that are threatening Sudan," Al-Turabi said.

President Al-Bashir urged the Sudanese people "to be prepared for war soon."

However, Sudanese Foreign Minister Ismail later told Reuters that the government in Khartoum believed the United States could play a very important role in ending the 16-year-old conflict, if it acted in a neutral, fair way. "Your [U.S.] policy now will not lead to peace. It will lead to the continuation of war, the suffering of the people, the loss of lives in the south," he said.

On Oct. 25, Egyptian Foreign Minister Moussa commented on Albright's criticism of the Egyptian-Libyan initiative, telling reporters that "Egyptian foreign policy is a matter that concerns Egypt alone. To merely give one's opinion is something else." He said that the "Egypt-Libya initiative is only related to Egypt and Libya, and it is not aimed at the interests of any other state." Moussa emphasized that "Sudan is an extremely crucial matter to Egypt because it is related to our national security and all neighboring countries, north and south of Sudan, are concerned just as much."

On Oct. 24, the day after Albright's meeting with Garang in Nairobi, Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi arrived in Cairo for talks with Moussa, to coordinate the Egyptian-Libyan initiative with that of IGAD. Kenya has chaired IGAD

for several years. Moi realizes that the IGAD talks are deadlocked, and that new steps have to be taken. Hence, his support for the Egyptian-Libyan initiative. All reasonable leaders in the region have realized that continuation of the current policy is perpetuating a war which no party can any longer afford to fight. What is needed is peace and development. The warlord posture of Garang which he has adopted, along with the Frantz Fanon theory of implacable violence, has been exposed as a nihilist nightmare that has achieved nothing but death for southern Sudan.

Garang sabotages the Cairo meeting

Reflecting the intense effort played by Egypt to find a final settlement for the war in Sudan, the umbrella group of the Sudanese opposition, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), was invited to hold a conference in Cairo on Oct. 23-24, at the same time that Ismail was in Cairo and Albright was in Nairobi. The aim was to encourage the NDA, composed of both southern and northern Sudanese rebel groups, to form a delegation to meet with Sudanese government representatives in Cairo under the Egyptian-Libyan initiative.

However, Deng Alor, the SPLA representative, disrupted the Cairo meeting only hours after Garang had met with Albright in Nairobi. The NDA postponed any decision until Nov. 15, when it meets in Kampala, Uganda.

The preparatory talks which will precede a national reconciliation conference were originally set for Sept. 13, but were postponed indefinitely after Garang expressed reservations. Echoing Albright, Alor stated that the Egyptian-Libyan initiative is not compatible with the IGAD initiative.

In response to this attempt to isolate the northern opposition group, NDA member Sadig Al-Mahdi, leader of the Ummah Party, attacked Albright, in a seminar at Cairo University on Oct. 26. Al-Mahdi said that "there is a high degree of haste and ignoring facts." He emphasized that the decision in this matter is up to the IGAD countries, and that there is no reason for such bold U.S. interference which provoked the resentment of the IGAD member-states. He stressed that "imposing a European-American mood on the IGAD initiative will mean the separation of the south, because the Western countries support the self-determination issue." He warned against attempts "to encourage the opposition to invade the country and overthrow the government by force." Al-Mahdi said that this "will mean burning [defaming] the Sudanese opposition, in the same manner Washington burned the Iraqi opposition."

Al-Mahdi's statement reflects the major strategic shift which has taken place in the region. Al-Mahdi, who is a former President of Sudan, fled his country in 1997 to Eritrea to join the NDA, believing that the government in Khartoum would fall shortly thereafter through an uprising. This did not come to pass. He now lives in Egypt, promoting the Egyptian-Libyan initiative for a comprehensive peaceful settlement for all of Sudan.

Tensions between Egypt and Israel

In the few days during and after Albright's tour in Africa, tension was provoked between the Egypt and Israel on the peace process in the Middle East. U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen's utterances at the "Bright Star" war games added fuel to the fire.

Israeli officials, especially Foreign Minister David Levy and Science Minister Matan Vilna'i, made harsh, provocative statements implying that Egypt is an obstacle to the resumption of the "final status" negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. Furthermore, Israeli Foreign Ministry officials are stressing that Egypt is trying to dictate a negotiation policy to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, and is rallying other Arab states to adopt a hard line vis-à-vis Israel and block any Israeli attempts to normalize relations.

Vilna'i gave a lecture in Washington at the Israeli Policy Forum on Oct. 27, in which his main theme, according to the *Jerusalem Post*, was, "We must be prepared to fight a war with Egypt if necessary." Vilna'i, who is a former Deputy Chief of Staff, listed Egypt as a potential long-range threat. "The third circle [of danger to Israeli security] is missiles that can be launched into the civilian centers of Israel from Iraq, Iran, Libya, and from Egypt if something will happen," he said. Worse, Vilna'i said that the Islamists could take power in Egypt, and he reminded the audience that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was killed by the Muslim Brotherhood. "They will try to do something," he said, implying a threat to the life of President Mubarak.

Moussa criticized Levy's remarks, saying, "We regret these statements by Levy. Egypt is fully committed to promoting the pursuit for comprehensive peace by encouraging negotiations on all tracks." He added that this peace can only be achieved when the agreements signed by the Palestinians and Israelis are fully implemented.

Egypt has increasingly assumed a pivotal role in the Arab-Israeli negotiations. This has come as a natural response to the Clinton administration's failure to live up to its promise to force all parties to live up to their promises. These developments culminated in the announcement by Moussa, prior to the Nov. 3-4 Oslo summit, that Egypt will not attend a Mideast summit proposed by Norway.

Cohen in Albright's shoes

The other provocation came from Cohen, who, while attending the "Bright Star 99" war games in Egypt (see *EIR*, Oct. 29, p. 37), insulted his hosts. First, he said that the war games are aimed at containing Iraq. Moussa immediately replied that "the Bright Star drills have nothing to do with Iraq." In fact, at the time of the drills, a high-level Egyptian delegation was visiting Iraq to concluded commercial agreements.

Second, Cohen said that the United States is interested in establishing military and security cooperation between Egypt and Israel. At a later press conference, Moussa commented

that "no discussion has been raised regarding military cooperation between Egypt and Israel," and that "any talk about military cooperation with Israel is overruled."

Third, Cohen said that Egypt should be prepared to protect itself from threats of Iranian long-range missile attacks by importing U.S. Patriot defense systems. This was a slap in the face of the Egyptian hosts, who have been taking steps to normalize relations and expand economic cooperation with Iran.

The official Egyptian press responded with "anti-American" commentaries that seldom appear there. The *Al-Ahram* daily editorialized:

"U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen is not going to help the cause of peace in the Middle East by acting as if major progress has already been made and the time has come to start considering post-peace arrangements, including joint military exercises between the Arab countries and Israel. Israel continues to occupy Arab land in Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon. Its huge arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, aimed at the Arab countries, is another threat. If Israel fails to meet Arab demands and allay their concerns, it will not be possible to normalize ties fully, let alone establish genuine cooperation.

"The United States, instead of seeking to dictate the agenda of sovereign states, should listen to its close regional allies and trust their assessment of the situation. The statements made by Secretary Cohen during his tour this week, and his incapacity to see beyond the Israeli point of view, can do nothing to bring the region closer to its goals of peace and stability."

This is important advice that has been brushed aside by Albright, Cohen, and other members of the Principals Committee, who are acting as imperial masters dictating policy to everyone. This possibly applies to all U.S. foreign policy interventions everywhere on the globe.

The issue of Sudan, however, could become the breaking point of American-Egyptian relations. Sudan and the Nile are red lines for Egypt's strategic considerations. Also, the groups that have been targetting Sudan over allegations of oppression of religious minorities, slavery, and abuse of human rights, are the same ones that have been attacking Egypt during the past two years. These groups, which are also enemies of the Clinton administration, must not be allowed inside the U.S. State Department under the cloak of Albright and her minions. Under Albright, the State Department has followed British guidance in every step, keeping the Clinton administration hostage to a war policy vis-à-vis Sudan, Iran, Libya, and Iraq.

The British Foreign Office, with the help of Albright's State Department, has succeeded in selling the southern Sudanese "cause of Garang" to the United States. Meanwhile, the British, in their usual double-game, have reestablished full diplomatic relations with Sudan and Iran, and commercial relations with Sudan, Iran, and Libya.